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THE CURSE IN *OEDIPUS REX*  
AND *ABHIJÑĀNAŚAKUNTALAM*

Ancient cultures had a great respect for the uttered word. It is as though the uttered word had an existence of its own and possessed a power which bound gods and men alike. Once uttered, oaths, curses, boons and oracles must ineluctably find their fulfilment. The power of the WORD is supreme. It is illustrated by innumerable examples in the ancient epic tradition of different cultures and constitutes one important feature of that mythico-magical pattern which symbolizes the aura of supernatural forces by which human existence is encompassed. Human initiative is not denied, but it is strictly circumscribed by the dictates of the word.

When we come down to the particular working out of the infallibility of the word as embodied in a curse, we notice various modalities in the way in which a curse operates. Generally speaking a curse is uttered against a person who has committed a sin or a crime. The sin or crime may be deliberate, as in the case of Atreus ; it may be committed in ignorance, as in the case of Daśaratha and Oedipus. The punishment may afflict the sinner alone, as in the case of Ahalyā ; it may also extend to the family of the sinner or affect other persons implicated in its fulfilment : Rāma and Sītā are victims of the curse uttered against Daśaratha, and Oedipus and his children victims of the curse uttered against Laius and Jocasta.

But the most interesting feature in the particular context of the present study is the difference between the nature of a curse in the ancient Indian and Greek traditions. In the Indian tradition a good number of curses are conditional. Either in the formulation of the curse itself or as a result of a prayer for mercy, a condition is attached to the curse which, once fulfilled, puts an end to the

ineluctability of the punishment. The curse, of course, remains operative but, at the same time, a definite hope is given that its operation may one day be suspended. That hope, moreover, is no vain hope, for in the case of conditional curses the condition thwarting their operation is always fulfilled. It is as though the Indian mentality was reluctant to face the possibility of ultimate disaster.

In the Greek tradition, on the contrary, there are no conditional curses. There may be a condition previous to the curse, as in the case of Laius. If Laius had not begotten a son, there would have been no scope for the curse. Similarly, if Achilles had chosen to return to Peleus' domain and to refrain from fighting, he would have had a long and peaceful existence. But once the condition that makes the curse operative is fulfilled, there is no mitigation possible. Unlike the ancient Indian, the ancient Greek does not shrink from viewing human existence as under the sway of implacable necessity.

Many have seen in this divergence between the two traditions the reason why the ancient Greeks were able to create tragedy, while the ancient Indians banished it from their dramatic conception. To my mind, this is a rather superficial over-simplification, especially when it leads one to assert that Greek tragedy makes of man a helpless toy in the hands of a malevolent destiny. Cocteau's *The Infernal Machine* is a good illustration of what happens to Greek tragedy when interpreted in this fashion.

The parallel study of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Kālidāsa's *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* offers us an ideal testing ground. We have, on the one hand, Durvāsas' curse which might have spelt disaster for the pair of lovers had not Anasūyā's intervention obtained from the sage a hopeful alleviation of the curse, and, on the other hand, Apollo's curse which no human initiative could deflect from its appointed course.

In Kālidāsa's play both Duśyanta and Śakuntalā remain unaware of the curse till the end of the curse but totally blind as to the modality of its fulfilment.

#### KĀLIDĀSA'S APPROACH

The Mahābhārata's account of the story of Śakuntalā is a good piece of epic narrative. But Kālidāsa could not make of it a dramatic

plot without reshaping and refining it. The main weakness of the epic story was the character of Duṣyanta. The king has been afraid to send for Śakuntalā and, as the years passed, the memory of the hermit-girl has slowly faded away. But when she appears before him with her grown-up boy, he remembers all right but, afraid of incurring the blame of his subjects, he pretends not to know her :

*So'tha śrutvāpi tad vākyaṁ tasyā rājā smarannapi /  
abrahma smarāmti tvayā bhadre samāgamam //*

[The king heard what she had to say, and he remembered.  
Yet he replied, "Lady, I do not remember having been  
united to you." ]

However heart-rending the distress of Śakuntalā may be after such an arbitrary repudiation, Kālidāsa felt that the stature of the king lacked in dramatic dignity. The repudiation had to be genuine, that is, based on a genuine lack of memory. If, at the same time, it could be shown that the king's oblivion was the result of some failing inherent in the love-situation of the protagonists, the *nāṭaka* would have a plot of rare dramatic density. The curse of Durvāsas becomes the pivot of the drama and the *viṣkambhaka* of the fourth act transforms a rather insipid epic story into a well-knit and highly dramatic action. The logical sequence is worth considering :

- 1 Absorbed in her love-dream Śakuntalā fails to answer the call of Durvāsas.
- 2 Durvāsas curses her : she is unaware of the curse.
- 3 Her friends hear the curse and Anasūyā obtains from the sage a mitigation.
- 4 The curse acts immediately and Duṣyanta forgets the hermitage episode. Consequently he does not send for Śakuntalā.
- 5 When Śakuntalā is found pregnant, Kaṇva sends her to her husband.
- 6 Duṣyanta fails to recognize her and sends her away.

Such a structure would have made old Aristotle very happy. The fact that, in their confrontation in the fifth act, both Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā are totally unaware of the curse, gives to the situation its dramatic intensity. A double *hamartia* (i.e. ignorance) brutally separates and antagonizes the two lovers, both victims of a force of

which they are unaware and against which they are powerless. Suspicion and bitterness fill both hearts : Śakuntalā sees in Duṣyanta an irresponsible and shameless profligate ; Duṣyanta suspects Śakuntalā of ambitious deceit. The moral stature of both remains unimpaired. It is the curse of Durvāsas that operates the *katharsis* of Duṣyanta's conduct by transforming an arbitrary and shameless repudiation into an act of noble and delicate honesty. It is the same curse that leaves Śakuntalā in a state of bitter frustration. This ambiguous estrangement of the two lovers shows the power of the curse at work.

But the curse is conditional and the lost ring is found and shown to the king.

- 7 This brings about the recognition : the king realizes what he has done. He blames himself for his cruelty and cannot figure out why his memory had failed him. Sānumatī witnesses the king's repentance and reports to Śakuntalā who, like the king, remains in the dark as to why she was submitted to such a humiliating trial.
- 8 Even when they meet afterwards there remains a shadow of incomprehension, until, right at the end, Mārīca reveals to them the cause of their estrangement. Both express their relief. Chastened by their experience they are reunited and their child seals their union.

Thus the whole structure of the play rests on the curse and on its infallible operation. Without it the drama would lose its power and would become a mere episodic staging of an old epic story. But the curse is conditional and makes the happy ending possible.

#### **SOPHOCLES' APPROACH**

In Chapter 8 of his *Poetics* Aristotle puts us on guard against a wrong conception of a unified plot. "Some people think that a plot is unified merely because it is about one man....One writing a *Heraclid* is wrong in assuming that because Heracles is a single individual it follows that his story possesses unity." I am afraid that many who claim to analyze Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, in fact analyze only Oedipus' story. They show him pursued from birth by a

malignant destiny and driven, in spite of himself, towards the fulfilment of a curse which no human initiative can stop. They are never clear as to what the curse has in store for Oedipus. Is it parricide and incest? Or is the act of self-blinding also a part of destiny's programme?

Now, the first thing to bear in mind is that when Sophocles' tragedy—not Oedipus' story—begins, the curse is already fulfilled. Oedipus has killed his father and married his mother some twelve or thirteen years before the action begins. Oedipus is a happy husband, a devoted king and the father of four children. It is, no doubt, on set purpose that Sophocles kept the curse outside the plot of his drama. Had he intended to build his tragedy around the curse, he would have imitated Aeschylus who wrote a trilogy on the Theban dynasty. Although the last tragedy alone has survived—*The Seven Against Thebes*—the general theme of the trilogy is easy to surmise. In the words of Albin Lesky, "Aeschylus has given a new depth to the idea of a curse resting on a whole family. The curse does not manifest itself in successive generations without reason, fortuitously driving innocents to destruction; instead it reveals itself time and again in connection with sinful acts, which are expiated by disaster."<sup>1</sup> The question which is of central importance is: "Has Sophocles conceived the god-directed path through the world as Aeschylus did, in the form of an ever-renewed balance between guilt and retribution with wisdom as the ultimate aim?"<sup>2</sup>

Let us first gather the elements which will help us answer this question:

- 1 The curse is not presented as affecting a whole family. Oedipus heard it as an answer to a personal question and, throughout the play, we never find him laying the responsibility of his misery at the door of his parents.
- 2 When the play begins Oedipus is not obsessed by the curse. Although he knows it, he is fully convinced that he is out of its clutches and that, as long as he keeps away from Corinth, he can enjoy perfect security.
- 3 Aeschylus' ethical preoccupations are absent in Sophocles' play. All those who have attempted to discover the 'moral flaw' deserving punishment are at variance with one another, both regarding the nature of Oedipus' moral weakness and

regarding the punishment. Had he been less impulsive, he might have given way to Laius and avoided parricide. Had he been more perspicacious, he might have wondered at the age of the queen of Thebes and refused to marry her. Had he been less passionately bent on knowing his parentage, he might have avoided his final disaster.

Such considerations are usually put forward by the very people who insist that Oedipus is marked by destiny from birth and that the curse must find fulfilment, whether Oedipus is virtuous or not. Starting with a wrong interpretation of Aristotle's *hamartia* as 'moral flaw', they try to find a moral justification for the punishment, forgetting that Aristotle states clearly that misfortune is most likely to arouse pity when it is undeserved.

- 4 If we compare the situation of Duṣyanta with that of Oedipus, we shall understand better Sophocles' dramatic conception. Duṣyanta fails to recognize Śakuntalā because he is under the effect of the curse. His lack of memory is the very object of the curse, but he does not know that there is a curse. Oedipus, on the contrary, knows the curse. What he does not know is that the curse is already fulfilled. But his ignorance is not the effect of the curse, it is simply a feature of his human condition : man does not know who he is.
- 5 There is a shift of intention in Oedipus' quest. At the beginning he is the king seeking the welfare of his beloved city. But from the moment Jocasta arouses doubts in his mind by her description of Laius and of the place where he was killed, the city is forgotten and Oedipus becomes a man seeking his real identity.

We may now attempt to answer the question set above. Unlike Aeschylus and Kālidāsa for whom the curse is intimately linked with moral retribution, Sophocles views the curse as the symbol of a hidden force which shapes the life of a mortal without any reference to the moral value of its victim. The curse is not a punishment. Moreover, Sophocles avoids the Aeschylean conception of a family-curse. The *Oedipus Rex* stands as a self-contained dramatic unit



The fulfilment of the curse is *not* the subject of the dramatic action. As far as the factual fulfilment of the curse is concerned, there is no difference between Oedipus at the beginning of the play and Oedipus at the end. The dramatic movement is not the movement of a man driven by fate to the perpetration of heinous crimes, it is a movement from ignorance to full awareness, or, in the words of Aristotle, it is *anagnorisis* which constitutes the dramatic action.

Sophocles stresses again and again the pathetic situation of the man who is ignorant of his true identity. When Teiresias brutally discloses the horror of Oedipus' situation, Oedipus is unable to take it in. He is still under the illusion that Polybus and Merope are his true parents. He has left them for good and the seer's insinuation that "the curse of a father and a mother, like a double whip, will soon drive you away from here" can only appear to him as the raving of a dangerous madman.

In the masterly reconstruction of the past when Jocasta and Oedipus exchange confidences, the deepest and most cruel irony of a shared illusion makes of the loving relationship of those two mortals the most tragic mockery of conjugal love. They know and they do not know. They speak of two different oracles, unaware that they speak of the same divine voice. Jocasta is convinced that her son is long dead. Oedipus feels safe as long as he is far away from Corinth. But we know that, under the illusion of assumed personalities, they are son and mother groping for a security which they have enjoyed for many years and which is now threatened by gnawing doubts.

What shatters happiness is not the fulfilment of the curse : Oedipus and Jocasta have been happy and prosperous for years after the curse was fulfilled ; further, the ignorance in which they have lived and the gradual revelation of their true identity are outside the scope of the curse. The curse and its fulfilment are the mythic background of the play. A myth loses its deeper meaning when it is read as a concrete and historical incident. In Sophocles' play the curse and its fulfilment symbolize the mysterious fringe of human existence which usually remains unknown. At times, after years of patient waiting it is revealed on the occasion of some incident, of some duty to fulfil, of some seemingly well intentioned quest. It enters into the texture of daily existence and leaves no peace to man until it is unravelled. That is why

the reversal (*peripeteia*) following upon the recognition (*anagnorisis*) is expressed in terms of knowledge and manifestation, and not in terms of a curse or ineluctable fate. Jocasta who is the first to perceive the horrible truth tells Oedipus, "O Wretched man, may you never *know* who you are." (l. 1068) Then Oedipus himself, after the Theban shepherd has told his story, "Alas, alas ! at last everything is clear. O Light, may I see you today for the last time, since *I am revealed* to be the son of parents from whom I should never have been born, the husband of her whom I should never have married and the murderer of him whom I should never have killed." (ll. 1181-1185)

And the Chorus : "Time which sees everything (*ho panth'horôm khronos*) *has found you out* in spite of yourself." (l. 1213)

The last utterance of the Chorus, "Let us declare no man happy until he has crossed the boundary of life without having suffered" (ll. 1529-1530), could be rendered as : "Let us declare no man happy until he has taken with him to his grave the illusion on which his happiness was founded."

#### SOPHOCLES AND KĀLIDĀSA

Both Sophocles and Kālidāsa are masters in the art of handling the delicate device of *anagnorisis*. But while in Kālidāsa, every step towards full realization is a step towards joy and fulfilment, in Sophocles each step brings deeper anguish as the spectre of truth reveals its dreadful features one by one. While in Kālidāsa the child leads a full recognition and acts as the providential link between husband and wife, in Sophocles the children are the living and irrefutable witnesses of an unspeakable abomination. Finally, while in Kālidāsa both estrangement and recognition are the direct effect of the curse, in Sophocles both ignorance and revelation stand independently of the curse and are not in any way elements of its fulfilment.

A parallel study of the process of recognition in the two plays will help us to appreciate better the dramatic vision of the two dramatists :

Duśyanta's memory has been restored by the sight of the signet-ring. The curse does not work any more. The king is both deeply

sorry for what he has done and puzzled by the long period of oblivion and the sudden manner in which his memory has come back. Indra's summons puts an end to his despondent mood. On his way back from the successful outcome of his assignment, he enters Mārīca's hermitage and meets his own child whom he does not know. Childless as he thinks he is, he feels an instinctive attraction towards the boy. Then he sees the sign of sovereignty in the boy's hand. He learns that the child is a scion of the Puru race and one hermit woman remarks on his resemblance to the king. He is told that the child's mother is the daughter of an *apsaras* and that she gave birth to her baby in the hermitage because she had been repudiated by her husband. Then there is the pun on Śakuntalā's name and, finally, the amulet incident and the boy's declaration that his father's name is Duṣyanta. Thus it is around the child that the climax is gradually built and it is the child who leads his father to meet his repudiated wife. But their reunion is still clouded by a mist of incomprehension. It is only when Mārīca reveals to them that they both have been victims of a curse that husband and wife can look at each other with perfect serenity. The king is told not to blame himself for a fault which he had committed unawares and Śakuntalā is asked to banish all resentment from her heart. The final reunion is bathed in an atmosphere of serene gravity and pervaded by a chastened mood in contrast with the passionate love which made the two young lovers husband and wife. Through the operation and cessation of the curse, the dramatic action completes its spiral movement culminating in perfect harmony.

When the action of Sophocles' tragedy begins the curse has been fulfilled. But its effect cannot be, as in the case of Duṣyanta, obliterated. Both Oedipus and Jocasta are ignorant of their true relationship. And it is that ignorance which gives them security. Once the wedge of doubt succeeds in opening a crack in that wall of security behind which they unconsciously seek shelter, the whole edifice of their life begins to totter.

It is not without design that Sophocles has kept the curse outside the plot of his drama. Apollo stands as a mythical symbol, not just as a conventional image meant to illustrate some point of doctrine, but as "as an image which is derived from the vital ties that bind us to our world and which can evoke deeper and deeper levels of that

experience across the barriers of time and space." " Adult man and woman carry in the very texture of their life the stamp of Apollo's action. Sophocles refrains from passing judgment on that divine influence. He accepts it as a fact, as an essential feature of our human condition.

Thus the *Oedipus Rex* begins with a man and a woman whose existence has already been shaped by Apollo. They move in half darkness, for they know what Apollo had in store for them, but they do not know that Apollo has already accomplished his design. They think of themselves as king and queen of Thebes, as lawful husband and wife. That is the façade behind which lurks the abominable truth. There is no wilful hypocrisy, no deliberate duplicity. The whole dramatic action is nothing but the slow erosion of a false identity accompanied by the gradual revelation of a shattering reality.

Let us briefly recall the stages of the dramatic action :

- 1 Goaded by Oedipus' sarcasm Teiresias blurts out the full truth. It is too much for Oedipus to absorb. It just does not make sense. How can a Corinthian prince, son of Polybus and Merope, be involved in the family affairs of the Theban dynasty ? This outburst of the blind seer can only be a part of a malignant plot hatched by Creon. And yet, the blunt revelation has touched some fibre of his inner being. For, although he accuses Creon of having concocted a false oracle, he goes on enquiring into the death of Laius.
- 2 Jocasta tries to pacify him. Genuine or concocted, the oracle should not cause him to be anxious. In her desire to allay her husband's fears Jocasta succeeds only in sowing in his mind the seed of doubt. The circumstantial evidence of Laius' murder is an accusing finger pointing to him. Still convinced that he is the son of Polybus and Merope, he fears lest he might be the object of the terrible malediction which he uttered against the murderer of Laius :  
 "If I must go into exile, I cannot visit my own people, neither can I tread the soil of my own country, for that would condemn me to share the bed of my mother and to kill my father Polybus who begat me and reared me up." (ll. 823-827)
- 3 The Corinthian messenger arrives with the news that Polybus

is dead. Jocasta triumphs and Oedipus begins to hope again. When he expresses his reluctance to return to Corinth as long as Merope is alive, the messenger asks him why he is afraid. Oedipus tells him about the curse and the messenger, to reassure him, replies that Polybus and Merope are not his true parents. He relates how he himself brought Oedipus as a tiny baby from mount Cythaeron and how the king and queen of Corinth adopted him. As to whose baby he was, the messenger does not know. Jocasta understands who he is and kills herself. Oedipus' pilgrimage to Truth is not completed yet. He imagines that he is the child of Fortune. Nothing will stop him on the way to knowledge.

- 4 The Theban shepherd dispels the last remnant of Oedipus' blindness : Laius is the father whom he has killed, Jocasta, the mother whom he has married.

The *peripeteia* following upon the recognition is clearly expressed by the Chorus. There is no mention of the curse, no mention of a baby doomed before his birth. There is mention of Oedipus, the powerful king whose good fortune aroused the envy of his subjects and who has now fallen into the deepest misery (ll. 1524-1526). And the cause of his fall is his *anagnorisis*, i.e. his passage from ignorance to awareness. And such is the potential tragedy of every man.

## CONCLUSION

In Kālidāsa's play it is the curse which is the mainspring of the dramatic action : the curse causes the king to forget, explains the estrangement of the two lovers who, ignorant of Durvāsas' malediction, fail to understand what is happening to them. Because the curse is conditional, it loses its power once the ring is placed before Duṣyanta. Finally it is Mārica who restores peace and serenity by revealing the secret working of the curse. In the *Oedipus Rex*, precisely because Sophocles deliberately keeps the curse outside the dramatic action, it is Oedipus' initiative which sets the dramatic action moving. Both at the beginning and at the end of the play, Oedipus is a parricide incestuously united to his mother. The dramatic action is the passage from ignorance to knowledge. Sophocles has deliberately

shorn his play of all ethical undertones in order to present man in the stark precariousness of his condition. Sophocles has a great respect for man (one may remember here his Ode to Man in *Antigone*), but man is not fully the master of his destiny. There are hidden powers which shape his life. As long as he is not aware of them, he may enjoy life and govern his estate in the belief that he is at the helm. But woe to him if, in the pursuit of his duty or of his ambitions, he comes face to face with himself. Oedipus' tragedy is the tragedy of self-knowledge. Teiresias, the blind seer, had warned him :

“Alas, alas ! What a terrible thing is knowledge  
when it brings no profit to the knower.” (U. 316-317)

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#### NOTES

- 1 Albin Lesky, *Greek Tragedy*, trans. H.A. Frankfort (London, 1965), p. 63.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 98.
- 3 James P. Mackey, *Jesus the Man and the Myth* (London, 1979), p. 78.

## WESTERN LITERARY TERMS AND THEIR INDIAN ADAPTATIONS

Till the beginning of the nineteenth century all Indian languages had two distinct sets of literary terminology, one derived from the classical traditions and the other of an indigenous origin. Important though they were as tools for classification and identification of various genres and forms which existed in different languages of the country, they were not sufficient for the growth of any critical framework. The perceptive reader as well as the poets themselves must have noticed the obvious differences between the forms of classical literatures and those of modern Indian languages, and also the changes that took place between the classical models and their later adaptations. But there is no evidence to show that they had considered them seriously. As our grammarians, though highly trained in the techniques of linguistic description, never took any interest in any one of the living speeches of medieval India, so our scholars of *Alaṃkāra Śāstra* remained engrossed with Sanskrit, and did not think of the necessity of studying the younger literatures of India critically. It is primarily with our exposure to English literature and the subsequent adaptations of several Western literary forms in various Indian languages, that there emerged a new critical awareness in respect of modern Indian literatures which eventually demanded a new poetics. The critical exercises and the poetic activities had been following two separate lines of growth in medieval India. Very rarely did the two streams merge or even interact. Only from the early part of the nineteenth century the interactions between the two activities—creative and critical—started.

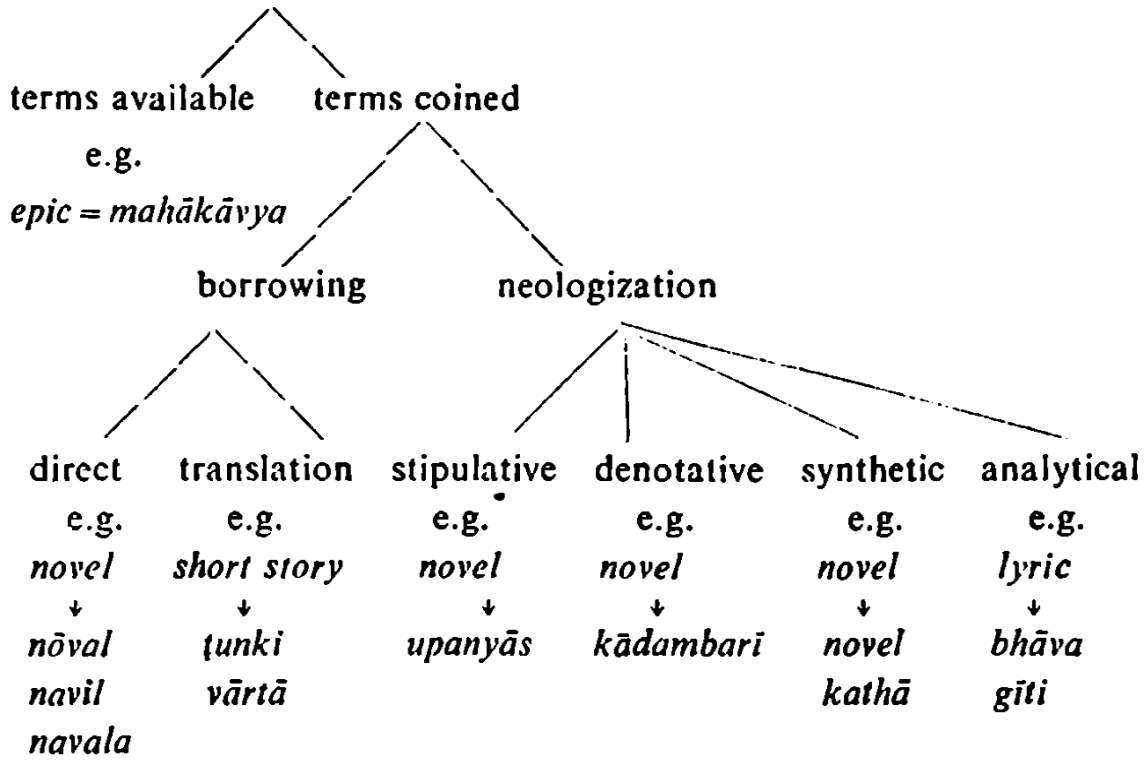
I do not want to go into the historical development of a new critical thought in modern Indian literary history. I propose to

show how the writers and the critics reacted to the Western literary forms and eventually tried to build up a new critical terminology in addition to the two sets, one derived from Sanskrit, ancient Tamil and Persian, and the other of an indigenous origin. In order to do so I should like to concentrate on a few literary terms of general nature<sup>1</sup>, some are names of certain genres, for examples, *epic*, *drama*, *novel* etc, some of movements and trends such as *romanticism*, *classicism* etc. Critics and writers of different languages have tried to cope with these terms independently of one another—though quite often their fruits of labour were jointly shared—and yet the underlying patterns of their actions were strikingly similar, if not identical. This indicates very strongly indeed the homogeneity of India as a literary area.<sup>2</sup>

## II

The creation of a new body of terminology is an important critical task, and in this task the writers are often conditioned by several forces belonging to our classical as well as indigenous traditions. The problem was not just of translation—which is a complex and difficult task, to say the least—of a particular term from one language into another, but to integrate it within a larger linguistic and literary framework. With certain Western forms the Indian critic had apparently no difficulty at all as they were easily indentified with similar forms existing in Indian literatures. There were some terms with which a kinship of certain existing Indian terms was quickly established. But there were forms and concepts involved in them which were altogether new. Adaptations of Western terms into Indian languages, therefore, involved serious problems in certain cases. The diagram given below shows in a simplified form the processes through which the new terms were incorporated in different Indian languages. These processes will be explained presently.





I have already mentioned that the Indian reader when exposed to Western literature did not find everything in it strange and entirely new. Nor did the Western readers of Indian literature feel everything in it exotic. While the Indian reader identified *Hamlet* as a *nāṭaka*, the Western reader of *Śakuntalā* did not find it difficult to accept it as a *drama*. For certain Western literary terms, thus, Indian equivalents were readily available, most important of them are *epic* and *drama*. For *epic*, most of the Indian languages use the term *mahākāvya* or its variants with some phonological modifications. Urdu uses *razmia*, which belongs to its classical tradition. Sindhi and Kashmiri have borrowed this term from the same source, though Indian Sindhi prefers the Sanskrit term nowadays. Malayalam uses *itihāsam*, rather than *mahākāvya*, which is also a Sanskrit word; and Telugu uses both with some distinctions. Tamil uses *kāvyam* as well as *pāvyam* both of which were used by its old grammarians to designate the epics written in ancient Tamil and Sanskrit. The word *nāṭaka*, as an equivalent form of the English *drama* is even more wide in its distribution. There is not a single language in India in which this word is not used. Even Urdu uses it and when it deviates from the pan-Indian traditions it does not use a word of Perso-Arabic origin but an indigenous term *swang* (probably borrowed from one of the dialects of Hindi). Tamil which had a

native word *kutu* has accepted *nāṭaham*, a modification of the Sanskrit word.

It is significant to note that the equivalence worked out between the Western and Indian terms did not give the false impression to our early critics that those forms were identical in all respects. This was first noticed by the European students of Oriental literatures. One T. Macan, for example, who wanted to translate the *Shahnamah* into English, wrote, "the laws of compositions by which the poets of Europe have been generally guided since works of Homer became generally known, have never been established or recognized in the Eastern world and consequently the rules of criticism founded upon those laws are wholly unapplicable to the writings."<sup>3</sup> This observation is important if only because of the fact, that even when two forms, such as the *epic* and the *mahākāvya* share certain common features, they can differ intrinsically, and the critical framework derived from one such type of poem may be inadequate to appreciate and evaluate the other. Madhusudan Datta who wrote an epic in Bengali in 1861 took Homer as his model and not Vālmiki. Later in the preface to his translation of the *Iliad* he observed that the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* were not epics in the sense *Iliad* could be called an epic.<sup>4</sup> The comparison between the Sanskrit epics and the *Iliad* as made by Datta is certainly unjust. But he was trying to make a distinction between the Indian *mahākāvya* and the Greek *epic* on the basis of their principles of construction. To accept *mahākāvya* as synonymous to *epic*, thus necessitated an extension and reorganization of the concept of *mahākāvya* so as to include the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Silappadikaram* and the European epic poems within a single universe. To call Michael Madhusudan's *Meghanādbadh Kāvya*, which violated many rules of Sanskrit poetics, a *mahākāvya* is to recognize this necessity. It compelled the critics to go into the larger questions of the evolution and typology and genetic relationship in literary genres.

Similarly the word *nāṭaka* also acquired new connotations. When Gerasim Lebedeff, a Russian scholar, produced a Bengali play (which was a translation of Paul Jordell's *The Disguise*) in 1799 he observed some of the basic differences between English plays and the Bengali dramatic traditions. In 1852 Tarachand Shikdar wrote in the preface to his play *Bhadrārjun*, "the events of the play and places of occurrences of the story have been denoted in the manner

of the European drama. I have not accepted the general dramatic technique which is approved by the Sanskrit dramatists." Yet he called his play a *nāṭak* rather than designating it by another term. Michael Madhusudan, too, wrote, "the genius of the Drama has not yet received even a moderate degree of development in the country. Ours are dramatic poems, and even Wilson, the great foreign admirer of our ancient language, has been compelled to admit this."<sup>5</sup> Bankim Chandra Chatterji went a step further when he wrote, "What we call *nāṭak* in India is not quite the same as what they call *nāṭak* in Europe. In both regions *nāṭak* is a poem which is acted and seen (*dṛśya kāvya*) but in Europe they mean a little more than that. They say that there are many poems which are presented as *dṛśya kāvya* but they are not actually drama...such as Goethe's *Faust* and Byron's *Manfred*."<sup>6</sup> In this essay Bankim Chandra Chatterji observes that while *Othello* is a *nāṭak*, *Śakuntalā* is a dramatic poem. Whether this observation is correct or not is a different matter. What is important is to realize that the Indian traditional terms were examined by the modern writers from a new angle and as a result they acquired new dimensions of meaning.

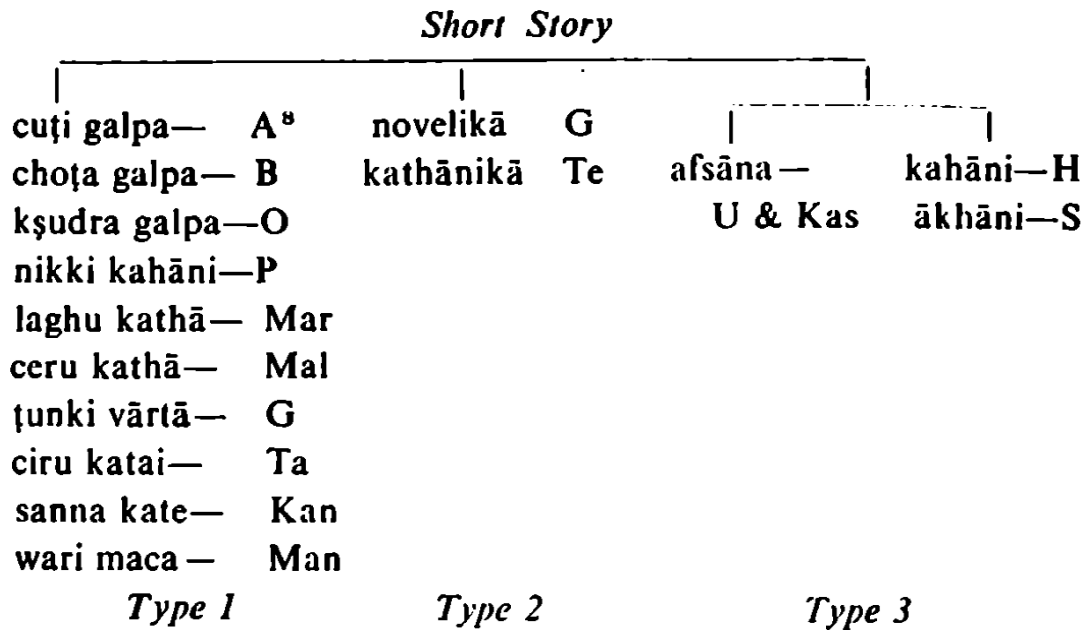
### III

Let us now look at those terms for which no corresponding terms were readily available in Indian languages. Critics either borrowed some terms and grafted them into our inventory of literary terms, or coined new words to designate them. Borrowing of terms involved the process of direct-borrowing or what the linguists call 'translation-loan'. Direct borrowing means the use of the foreign word with necessary phonological and morphological modifications required by a given language. The word *novel*, for example, was borrowed by several languages: *nōval* in Malayalam, *navala* in Telugu, *nabel* / *nabhel* in Bengali, *na:val* in Kashmiri, *novel* in Tamil and Urdu. Similarly the word *tragedy* was directly borrowed by Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati and Oriya. In some languages, along with the borrowed word, a coined word was also in use thus creating a situation of 'strength-hierarchy'. For some time both the terms were in free-variation i.e. both the forms were accepted in usage. Then a stage appeared when one of them was replaced by another or became less frequent. Bengali, for example, borrowed the word *novel* directly (written as *nabel* or *nabhel*) but it was replaced by

a coined word in literary writings. Chandu Menon, the author of *Indu Lekhā* (1898), which is the first novel in Malayalam, described his book as *puthu kathā* (new story) but the term did not gain currency. Critics invented another term *vāsanā kāvyam* (prose-epic). But finally, the borrowed word *nōval* triumphed over that. In Tamil, on the other hand, the borrowed word was replaced by a coined word, *putinam* (literally, 'new') which can be called a literal translation of the English word 'novel' as well.

In certain cases, the foreign words have been so radically modified that they give a false appearance of a native word. Telugu *navala*, for example, can prompt someone to analyze it as consisting of a Sanskrit word *nava* (new) with a suffix *-la*. This kind of Indianization can be seen in Marathi and Kannada term *sunīt* (borrowed from English 'sonnet') and partly in Hindi *trāsdī* : the term for tragedy.<sup>7</sup>

The term *short story* has been adapted by most of the Indian languages through translation-loan as the following chart will show :



All the terms for *short story* in different Indian languages fall into three types. The major type (type 1) belongs to the category of translation-loan where the first constituent means 'small' or 'short', and the second constituent means 'story'.<sup>9</sup> Gujarati *novelikā* and Telugu *kathānikā* belong to the second type. The diminutive suffix *-ikā* in these constructions keeps them separate from the first type of constructions as well as from the third type to which belong Hindi, Sindhi, Urdu and Kashmiri. *Afsāna*,<sup>10</sup> *kahāni* and *ākhāni*

come from the traditional set of terminologies in these languages. They are grouped separately in the chart on the basis of their etymology. Words belonging to type 3, though already used in the respective languages, acquired a new connotation, being employed to designate a particular form of literary genre. Similarly the terms in type 1, were used for the first time in the respective languages to mean a particular thing and nothing else. These constructions, *cuti galpa* in Assamese, or *choṭa galpa* in Bengali or *wari maca* in Manipuri, appeared for the first time in the history of these languages respectively to designate 'short story'. They are entirely new collocations in these languages.

Another example of translation-loan can be given to emphasize the identical patterns of literary terms in Indian languages. Let us take the terms *folk literature* and *folk tales*.

<i>folk</i>	<i>literature</i>	<i>tales</i>	
lok	sāhitya	kathā kathe kahāni galpa vārtā	A,B, Mar, S Kan H,P O G
luki jānapada		kathi kadhā	Kas Te
naṭṭapuram nāṭōṭi	ilekkiyām (paṭṭu) <sup>1 1</sup>	katāi kathā	Ta Mal
awāmi	adab	afsāna ākḥāni	U S

The word *folk* has several Indian equivalents: *loka* (a Sanskrit word meaning 'people' used in nine languages, and its variant *luki*, used in Kashmiri; *jānapada* (another Sanskrit word meaning 'relating to people') used in Telugu, *awāmi* (a Persian word meaning 'people') used in Urdu and Sindhi; and *naṭṭapuram* and *nāṭōṭi*<sup>1 2</sup> (a common Dravidian word meaning 'rural') used in Tamil and Malayalam respectively.<sup>1 3</sup> Kannada, along with *lok*, also uses *grāmin* and *halliyā* both meaning 'of village'.

For the word *literature* three predictable words belonging to

three distinct literary traditions of India, Sanskrit, Dravidian and Perso-Arabic respectively—*sāhitya*, *ilekkiyām* and *adab*—have been adapted without any difficulty. Kashmiri, Urdu and Sindhi use the word *adab*<sup>14</sup>, Tamil and Malayalam *ilekkiyām* and all other languages the Sanskrit word *sāhitya*. The word *tale* has been similarly substituted by the existing available words in these languages. But the resultant forms like *lok-sāhitya*, or *lok-vārtā* with a new meaning and concept were used for the first time in our languages.

In case of certain terms some languages borrowed them through translation, while others tried to identify them with equivalent native terms. The two separate patterns of adaptations are shown in the next chart :

<b>Translation</b> ↑	pari kathā	H, Mar, G, O	
	pari kahāni	P	
	pariū-ki-kahāniā	U	
	periñjū ākhāṇyū	S	
	pariyi kathi	Kas	
	heloigi wari	Man	
<b>FAIRY- TALES</b>			
<b>Equivalent word</b> ↓	<i>ancient tales</i>	<i>children's tales</i>	<i>unreal tales</i>
	paḍan kadai (Ta)	pillalu kathālu (Te)	kaṭam kathā (Mal)
	ammumma kadhaku (Te)	kuṭṭi kathā (Mal)	kinṇara kadheln (Kan)
	buṇimā kahāni (O)		rūp kathā (B)

At least nine Indian languages have adapted the term through a faithful translation.<sup>15</sup> But several languages have tried to identify

the term *faïry tale* with some regional tradition of story-telling. I have classified them into three groups : *ancient tales*, *children's tales* and *unreal tales*. The second element in all these terms belonging to all the three groups means 'story' or 'tale'. The first elements, however, differ in their semantic connotation and range. The meanings of *paḍan*, *ammumma*, and *buṛimā* in the first group, for example, are 'old', 'grandmother's' (literally, mother's mother's) and 'old mother' or 'grand-mother' respectively. I have called them *ancient tales*. They can be described as *grand-mother's tales* as well. The words *pillalu* and *kuṭṭi* in the second group mean 'of children' and 'children' respectively. In the third group all the terms have suggestions of 'unreality' or 'marvellous' in them. *Kaṭam* means 'unreal' or 'imaginary', *rūp* of *rūp-kathā*<sup>10</sup> is probably derived from *apūrva* (literally 'not-before', usually means 'beautiful' 'extra-ordinary') and *kinnara* is the name of mythical and supernatural beings—half-human and half-horse—gifted with musical talents.

#### IV

Let us have a look at the neologies which can be conveniently divided into four distinct groups on the basis of the methods involved in their formation. These groups may be called stipulative, denotative, synthetic and analytic. These groups, however, are not always strictly mutually exclusive and at times overlapping. I have borrowed these terms from Richard Robinson's *Definition* which deals primarily with the nature and problems of definition as employed by philosophers and mathematicians.

A stipulative definition is "the explicit and self-conscious setting up of the meaning-relation between some word and some object, the act of assigning an object to a name (or a name to an object), not the act of recording an already existing assignment."<sup>17</sup> Certain terms which emerged as a part of our literary terminology can be called stipulative if only because those words were employed to mean a new object, though the words had (and in some cases still have) different lexical meanings. Take, for example, the word *upanyās*. This word is now used in Assamese, Bengali, Hindi and Oriya as an equivalent of *novel*. For the same purpose Panjabi uses *upniās* and Sindhi *upanyāsu* both derived from the Sanskrit *upanyāsa*. In Sanskrit this word has been used in the sense of *prayoga* (application) or *abhiprāya* (intention), and its participial form *upanyasta* means 'placed' or 'kept

near'.<sup>18</sup> In *Śakuntalam*, for example, occurs this sentence : *Kim!-damupanyastam* meaning 'what is this presented or placed before me'. But this word was adapted to mean 'novel'. This I would call a stipulative process. It was a conscious setting up of a meaning relation between *upanyās* and *novel*.

While several languages use *upanyās*, Marathi and Kannada use *kādambarī*. In Sanskrit *kādambarī* means 'wine', 'female cuckoo' etc, and has no apparent connection with the meaning of the word *novel*. However, it is the name of a long story written by Bānabhatta in Sanskrit prose. The word, thus, designates or denotes an object by example, i.e. *novel* is a kind of story written in prose such as *kādambarī*. This is commonly known as the exemplifying or exemplificatory method, and this is what Robinson calls the denotative method.<sup>19</sup> The Urdu word *taghazzul* for *lyric* can be cited as another example of this method. Here *lyric* is exemplified by a thing known, which happens to be *ghazal*.

The Gujarati term *novel kathā* for *novel* is an example of the synthetic method, which indicates the relations of the things they mean to other things. "The thing meant is assigned to its place in a system of relations, synthesized into a whole with other things. Whereas the analytical method indicates the thing meant by showing it as a whole of parts, the synthetic does so by showing it as part of a whole."<sup>20</sup> The Gujarati term indicates the relation between the genre *novel* and the genre *kathā*, the former being a part of *kathā*, which is a general term for stories and fiction.

The term *bhāva gīti* (used in Marathi, Kannada and Telugu for *lyric*) on the other hand falls into the category of analytical method which tries "to indicate what specific object a word means, name of a bigger class within which that object falls, and then name something that distinguishes it from the rest of the class."<sup>21</sup> *Bhāva gīti*, which literally means 'emotional songs/poems', falls in this category. So does the term *gīti kavītā*, used in Assamese, Bengali, Manipuri<sup>22</sup> and Oriya. Lyric is first identified as a member of a bigger class : *kavītā* (poetry), and then it is distinguished from the rest of the class by its relation with *gīti* (song). The same is true of the Gujarati term *urmi-kāvya* (literally wave-poems, 'wave' obviously means, metaphorically, emotion). Another example comes from Tamil *orunarchipaaḍal*. This is composed of three words : *or* (single), *unarchi* (feeling) and *paaḍal* (poem) and it means 'a single-feeling-



poem'. The last element in the compound is the name of a bigger class and the first two elements distinguish 'lyric' from the rest of the class.

V

I should like to devote the concluding section of the paper to the examination of a few terms to show the basic similarity of the critical response all over the country to the Western literary terms without of course neglecting the importance of the difference. Let us start with the terms *critic* and *criticism*.

<i>Criticism</i>	<i>Critic</i>	
ālocanā	ālocak	H,P,S, Man
samālocanā	samālocak	A,B,O
vivecanā	vivecak	G
nirupaṇa	nirupak	Mal
vimarṣa	vimarṣak	Kan, Te
ṭikā	ṭikākār	Mar
samīkṣā	samīkṣak	H, Mar
tiranāyvu <sup>23</sup>	tiranaivaḍam	Ta
tanqi:d	naqa:d	U, S, Kas

Urdu, Kashmiri and Sindhi use a Persian term, Tamil a Dravidian, Manipuri a Sino-Tibetan (*neinaba* 'to look minutely'; *neinariba* 'critic'). All other Indian languages have coined a word from Sanskrit. The Sanskrit words differ from one another in varying degrees in respect of their meanings. The etymological or lexical meanings of Sanskrit have lost their relevance in most of the modern languages and they are now considered more or less as equivalents of the English words *critic* and *criticism*. But the terms are now stabilized and standardized in such a way that Bengali would never use *ṭikā* (which for a Bengali is 'note' or 'commentary') in place of *samālocanā*, or Malayalam would not use *samālocanā* in place of *nirupaṇa*. In fact the greatest divergence that can be seen in Indian literary terminology is in respect of these two terms: *critic* and *criticism*. All of them have borrowed words from their traditional reservoirs and yet their coining pattern is widely different.<sup>24</sup> That does not mean, however, that these languages have different concepts of 'critic' or 'criticism', though each language distinguishes between

the Sanskritic words into their finer shades. This phenomenon can be further illustrated from the terms for *essay*.

Prabandha	A, B, Kan, Mal, Man, O
nibandha	G, H, Kan, P, Mar
lekhanam	Mal
vyāsa	Te
upanyāsam	Mal
kaṭṭurai	Ta
majmoon	U, S
Kalampari	Kas

Urdu has coined a word from the Perso-Arabic tradition (which Sindhi has borrowed from Urdu) meaning 'purport', Tamil from its oldest grammar a word meaning 'to tell something in an orderly form', and the rest of the Indian languages from Sanskrit, none of which means exactly the same thing, and these words have been used for the first time in their history to mean a particular literary form and nothing else. About the English word *essay*, Bacon wrote, "The word is late but the thing is ancient." About these Indian terms one can say with some justification, "The word is ancient but the thing is late." The main distinction between this set of terms and the set for 'criticism' is that in the latter set the words belong to one semantic category while in the former the words are widely divergent in their meaning. Though *prabandha* and *nibandha* are sometimes interchangeable in different languages, their roots being the same, *vyāsa*, *lekhanam*, *upanyāsam* and *prabandha* are very different indeed. The point to be noted, however, is that in spite of this divergence in lexical items, several languages tend to converge at a particular item. Assamese, Bengali, Oriya, Manipuri form a single group, while Hindi, Panjabi and Sindhi form another well-knit group. In respect of certain terms Kannada goes with Telugu, Gujarati with Hindi, and in respect of certain other terms Kannada is closer to Marathi, and Sindhi is with Kashmiri and Urdu. The features of convergence, thus, are always present even when the features of divergence predominate in certain cases.

The most symmetrical patterns of convergence come from terms for *tragedy* and *comedy*. Several languages, particularly Assamese,

Bengali, Gujarati, Kashmiri and Oriya tend to use the European terms, though all the languages have invented native equivalents for them. Hindi—the terms are *trāsdi* and *komeḍi*—stands apart from the other languages in its attempt to create words which are partly borrowing and partly Indianization. In general, all Indian languages have created two sets of terms for *tragedy* and *comedy* with the help of antonyms, and focusing on the nature of the *end* of the play.

dukhānt	H, P	śokāntikā	Mar
sukhānt		sukhāntikā	
dukhāntu	S	viyogānta	B, O
sukhāntu		milanānta	
durānta	Mal, Kan	tunbiyal	Tam
sukhānta		inbiyal	
viṣādānta	Tel	alamia	U, S
sukhānta		tarabia	
karuṇāntikā	G	awabana poloiba <sup>26</sup>	Man
sukhāntikā		nungaibana poloiba	

In all the Indian languages, except Urdu and Tamil, the terms mean 'unhappy ending' and 'happy ending' respectively. For *comedy*, the pattern followed is identical in all languages, the terms meaning the same thing—*sukh* (happiness) in most of the languages, *milan* (union/meeting) in Bengali and Oriya. Tamil and Urdu do not emphasize the 'ending' (which all the other languages do as evident from the element *-ant/-antu/antika*, all meaning 'end'), but these terms mean 'concerned with' or 'about'.<sup>26</sup> Words used in the terms for *tragedy* in all the Indian languages are more or less synonymous—*dukh* (derived from the Sanskrit *duḥkha*, 'misery' 'unhappiness' 'sorrow'), *viṣād* (melancholy, sorrow), *karuṇā* (pity), *viyoga* (separation), *śoka*, *tunbu*, *alam*, *awa* all meaning sorrow. Only recently some critics of Marathi have proposed a change from *śokāntikā* (ending in sorrow) to *śokātmikā* (sorrowful in nature/sad in spirit) and similarly from *sukhāntikā* (happy-ending) to *sukhātmikā* (happy in spirit) to emphasize perhaps that the unhappy or happy ending by itself does not constitute the major feature of tragedy or of comedy. It is the

spirit of happiness or sorrow which pervades the theme and action of the play and determines its nature.

The term *trāśdi* deserves some attention.<sup>27</sup> It is not just an imitation of the word *tragedy* but it tries to incorporate one of the components of tragedy as defined by Aristotle. According to Aristotle tragedy arouses fear (*phobos*) and pity (*eleous*). While the Hindi term takes care of the first by its use of *trās* (fear), the Gujarati takes care of the second, *karuṇā* (pity). The Kannada critics have been prompted by a similar motivation in suggesting a new term *gambhīra nāṭak* (serious play), an analytical formation, the emphasis being on the 'seriousness' of the action, which reminds the Aristotelian expression *spoudaios*.

It must be pointed out that many critics' preference to the English terms as opposed to adapted equivalents has created a situation which I have called 'strength-hierarchy' in respect of certain terms. In some languages the adapted term has finally replaced the English term (e.g. in Bengali *upanyās* has replaced *nobhel*) and in some cases the Western term has finally triumphed over the coined term (e.g. in Bengali *tragedy* and *comedy* have replaced *viyogānta* and *milanānta nāṭak* respectively). But in some cases the Western terms and the coined terms are still competing with one another. Let us take the terms *romantic* and *realism* and their suggested Indian equivalents.

*romāni* (P, S, U)/*ru:me:ni:* (Kas)/ *romāncik* (P, O)/  
*svacchanda* (H, M)/*svaira-* (O)/*navanyās* (A)/  
*navoday* (Kan)/*bhāva-* (Te)/*mast* (G)/*kālpānikan* (Mal)/  
*karpanai* (Tam)

Generally *-tā*, *-vād*, *-ik* etc are suffixed with these words to form other words. These terms originated in different Indian languages at different times and each of these words tried to incorporate one of the distinguishing features of romanticism. The Tamil, Malayalam and Manipuri<sup>28</sup> terms stress the element of 'imagination' (*kālpunikam* 'imaginary' ; *karpanai* 'imaginary'), the Telugu and Gujarati terms stress 'emotion'—Gujarati *mast* (emotional excess or frenzy) can be better understood in contrast with its term for *classical*, *swasth* meaning controlled, quiet, healthy—the Assamese and Kannada on the 'newness'—Kannada *navoday* (new rising) is reminiscent of the

expression 'the renascence of wonder', and the Assamese *navanyās* has the overtone of a 'new order' as opposed to older traditions.<sup>29</sup> But most of the languages, in spite of these words, prefer using English words 'romance', 'romantic', 'romanticism' quite freely. Only time can tell whether the English terms will be finally accepted as the only standard critical terms or the Indian terms will be able to replace them. At the moment the situation is rather unstable though a strength-hierarchy is steadily emerging; in some languages it is the English word which is more frequent and prestigious, and in some languages it is the Indian word which is more used though not necessarily more prestigious. In case of *realism* and *realistic* on the other hand, the situation is comparatively stable and clear. Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Oriya, Telugu, and Kannada use *vāstab* (real) and *vāstab-vād* (realism), Hindi, Panjabi and Sindhi use *yathārtha* and *yathārthavād*—*yathārtha* means 'exact'—, Malayalam uses *yathā-tathā-prasthānam* (literally, as it is), Tamil *naṭappiyal* and Urdu *haqiqat*.<sup>30</sup> And unlike *romanticism* or *romantic*, the terms *realism* or *realist* are hardly used in these languages. Similarly *style* has been replaced by *śailī* in most of the languages, except in Tamil which uses its traditional form *naṭai*, and Urdu and Kashmiri use *aslub* along with *istayl* borrowed from *style*. *Symbol* appears as *pratik* in most of the languages, barring Tamil which uses *kuriyeedu*, and Urdu which has *alamaliat* (Kashmiri follows Urdu, and uses *ala:math*). In case of *plot* Urdu and Kashmiri have borrowed it from English—*plā:t*—while all the other languages employ Sanskrit words: *kathānak* (P, H), *kathāvastu* (B, O, S), *vastu* (Kan), *itivr̥ttam* (Mal). The Tamil *kataitalam*, however, is of Dravidian origin. The strength-hierarchy situation is more common within one language where there are more terms for one particular English term. For example, Kashmiri has two terms for *poetic image*—*shaira:ni* and *shabi:hi*, as Bengali has both *citrakalpa* and *vāk-pratimā*—and it is not yet decided which must be accepted as the standard form. In some cases the hierarchical situation is between the Western term and the Indian term (e.g. *tragedy* and *karuṇāntika* in Gujarati), sometimes between two Indian terms, one old and another new (e.g. *ghāt* and *ākṛtivandha* in Marathi for the term *form* or *swarup* and *ākār* in Gujarati) and sometimes between two Indian terms belonging to different traditions (e.g. *yathārtha* and *haqiqat* in Sindhi for the term *realism*). In case of Sindhi there is a tension between the two

different lines of growth in the language, one in Pakistan and the other in India. Pakistani Sindhi tends to follow the Perso-Arabic-Urdu tradition, while Indian Sindhi wants to borrow from Hindi. In case of several Dravidian languages the hierarchy situation has arisen mainly because of the tension and/or closeness, geographical as well as cultural, between the native Dravidian tradition on the one hand and the Sanskritic tradition on the other. For *symbol*, for example, Telugu has two terms *gurtu* as well as *cinha*, which is a Sanskrit word, Kannada has *prahasana*, a Sanskrit term, for *farce*, but it also has a native word *nage-nāṭaka*, (meaning 'laughter-play'), which is more popular.

In spite of such uncertainties, most of Indian languages have now more or less effectively solved the problems of adaptation of Western literary terms relating to genres and literary types. Inter-language borrowing—though detailed information of this process is difficult to obtain—has greatly helped towards the emergence of a common Indian pattern. The problems of adaptations of Western terms which the modern Indian critic is facing today, are mostly related to terms of critical analysis. Terms such as *form, structure, texture, technique, device, system, pattern, perspective, point of view, type, typology* etc are receiving more serious attention and the critics have achieved some success in developing a set of new terms to meet the demands of different schools of criticism. It is true that the terms are yet to be stabilized and in many cases they are still confined to small circles of academicians, but here also one observes the same kind of processes which had been operating since the beginning of the last century leading towards the emergence of a pan-Indian critical vocabulary. The adaptation of Western literary terms into our languages is significant if only because it shows the concern of Indian critics towards a careful and discriminative use of critical terms out of which a true language of criticism can emerge.

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#### NOTES

- 1 The data consist of the following items :  
allegory, ballad, blank verse, comedy, character, classic, classical, classicism, critic, criticism, diction, drama, epic, essay, fairy tales, farce, folk literature,

folk tales, form, lyric, myth, naturalism, novel, poetic image, plot, realism, realistic, romantic, romanticism, short story, sonnet, structures, styles, symbolism, textual criticism and tragedy.

- 2 The data used here comprising fifteen Indian languages have been collected from books and journals as well as from the scholars and writers in these languages. I am particularly grateful to the following scholars for helping me in collecting the data :

*Assamese* : Dr Indira Goṣwami ; *Gujarati* : Dr C.H. Mehta, Dr M.C. Dave and Dr Sitanshu Yashaschandra ; *Hindi* : Prof Nagendra, Dr P.N. Tripathi, Dr Omprakash ; *Kannada* : Mr T.C. Satyanath ; *Kashmiri* : Dr O.N. Koul ; *Malayalam* : Dr O.M. Anujan ; *Manipuri* : Miss Pramodini Devi ; *Marathi* : Dr N.K. Mirajkar ; *Oriya* : Prof K. Mahapatra, Mr Panchanan Mohanty ; *Punjabi* : Dr J.S. Ubbi ; *Tamil* : Dr V.R. Mahalingam ; *Telugu* : Mr P.C. Veereshalingam ; *Sindhi* : Dr M.K. Jetly ; and *Urdu* : Prof K.A. Faruqi, Dr Fazlul Haq and Dr G.R. Kanwal.

The interpretations of the data, as well as the possible errors, are entirely mine.

- 3 Quoted in Sisir Kumar Das, *Sahibs and Munshis, An Account of the College of the Fort William* (Delhi, 1978), p. 113.
- 4 See preface to *Hector-Badh* ed. Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay and Sajani-kanta Das (Bangiya Sahitya Parisat, Calcutta).
- 5 From a letter to a friend.
- 6 "Gīti Kāvya" (*Bangadarshan*, 1873), *Bankim Racanāvalī*, II, ed. J.C. Bagal, (Sahitya Samsad, Calcutta), p. 186.
- 7 Another instance of Indianization is found to be in the Hindi term *mithak* for 'myth', first used by Hazariprasad Dwivedi. Dwivedi, however, claims that he derived the word from Sanskrit *mithyā* (false). *Mithak* is now more popular than *kalpa kathā* suggested by Prof Nagendra.
- 8 The following abbreviations have been used in the charts and occasionally in the text. (Assamese) A, (Bengali) B, (Gujarati) G, (Hindi) H, (Kannada) Kan, (Kashmiri) Kas, (Malayalam) Mal, (Manipuri) Man, (Marathi) Mar, (Oriya) O, (Punjabi) P, (Tamil) Ta, (Telugu) Te, (Sindhi) S, and (Urdu) U.
- 9 The Manipuri term is a slight variant of the type, the construction being noun+adjective (*wari* means 'story' and *maca* means 'short').
- 10 In addition to this word Urdu has another term *dāstan* derived from Persian also meaning 'tale' or 'story'. But this is used to mean a cycle of medieval romance.
- 11 Pāṭṭu means 'song'. Malayalam distinguishes two types of pāṭṭu : *vadakkan pāṭṭu* belonging to northern Kerala, which are more poetic and popular, and *ṭakkanpāṭṭu*, belonging to south Kerala which contains a mixture of Tamil elements.
- 12 Malayalam *nāṭotippāṭṭu* is composed of three elements *nāṭu* (countryside), *oṭi* (that which is current) and *pāṭṭu* (song).
- 13 Though Manipuri uses the word *lok* on certain occasions, it tends to the use of the native word *phunga* e.g. *phunga wari* (folk tales) and *phunga warigī sāhitya* (folk literature).

- 14 etymologically *adab* means 'refinement'.
- 15 Though the Manipuri term uses different words, it is also a faithful translation of 'fairy tale', (*heloigi* = fairy, *wari* = story).
- 16 Some scholars, however, derive *rāp kathā* from *upakathā*, 'story, tale, fiction'. These stories are generally meant for children and usually narrated by grandmothers or grand-fathers. Thus this term can be included in any one of the groups belonging to *equivalent words*.
- 17 (Oxford, 1954), p. 59.
- 18 This word has been also used in the sense of *introduction* or *beginning* of a treatise, e.g. *brahmajijñāsaopanyāsamukhena vedānta vākyamīmāṃsā* (Śāririka bhāṣya). Sometimes it has been used in the sense of 'said' or 'illustrated'.
- 19 Robinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-117.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 98.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 98.
- 22 *Glta kāvya* is more frequent in Manipuri. It is generally described as *isei oiba yaba sheireng*, i.e. *sheireng* (poem) that is also an *isei* (song).
- 23 Literally, 'assessing the merit' of a work.
- 24 To some extent this is true in respect of terms for *character*. While the majority of languages use *caritra* or *pātra*, they are hardly interchangeable. The Tamil *pattiram* is probably related to the Sanskrit *pātra*. Urdu, Sindhi and Kashmiri use *kirdar*, Malayalam *svabhāvam* and Marathi *vyakti rekhā* (literally individual-outline) which has an undertone of characterization.
- 25 *Poloiba* means 'end of' *awabana* is composed of two elements, *awa* 'sad' and *bana*, infinitive-suffix. The Manipuri term, then, means literally 'the end of being sad/the end of the state of sadness'.
- 26 The Urdu suffix *-ia* has the function of the English suffix *-ous* to some extent. the Tamil suffix *-yal* originally meant 'chapter' or 'part' but later it meant 'nature of'. Hence *tunbiyal* would mean 'nature of sorrow'.
- 27 This word was first used by Prof Nagendra. It was strongly objected to by the grammarians, one of their arguments being that *trāsdā*, not *trāsdī*, is the correct form.
- 28 The Manipuri term *wakhaina shaba* means 'imaginary creation'.
- 29 This word has been included in P. Kataki's book on Assamese literary terms entitled *Sāhitya aru Sajñā* (Gauhati University Press, 1979), p. 167. *Navanyās* does not occur in Sanskrit though it is composed of two Sanskrit words : *nava* (new) and *nyāsa* (style/design/drawing/parts etc).
- 30 Kashmiri follows Urdu with a slight deviation. The Kashmiri term for relation is *haqiqath pasandi*. *Pasandi* is the Urdu equivalent of the Sanskrit *-vād* used frequently in Indo-Aryan languages. Malayalam uses *prasthānam*, another Sanskrit word, for that purpose.



## CHINUA ACHEBE

### COLONIAL SITUATION AND THE GENERATION OF REALISM

Chinua Achebe's fiction has invariably been categorized as 'realistic', but it seems to me that neither has his realism been accurately defined nor have its sources been adequately explored. In attempting to do so in this paper, I shall argue that the realism of Achebe's fiction springs from various facts of its relation to colonial culture, which is the generative matrix of all modern African literature. I shall examine three specific aspects of that relationship : first, the negative influence of colonialist literature on Achebe's novels ; second, the effects of literacy and of the transformation of oral culture into a literate one ; and, finally, the effects of the transition from a communal society to one based on individualism.

An appreciation of the negative influence in Achebe's fiction has to begin with an identification of two specific aspects of the dilemma produced by colonial praxis : cultural petrification and historical catalepsy. In order to reinforce his sense of superiority the European insists that the native is physically, psychologically, socially, and morally inferior to him, and thereby he denigrates the colonized subject and inadvertently creates a historical paradox for the latter. Since the moral validity and the social momentum of the indigenous culture have been negated by European denigration and by the autocratic rule of the colonial government, the African finds that if he adheres to the values of his own culture then he chooses to belong to a petrified society. However, if he accepts the Western culture then he finds himself engulfed in a form of historical catalepsy, since, by rejecting his own past, he belongs to a society that has no direction and no control over its own historical evolution. Achebe's reaction to these aspects of colonial pathology provides us with the impera-

tives underlying his fiction. As an intellectual and a writer he is more sensitive to cultural denigration than to the actual material exploitation. He is preoccupied with the "disaster brought upon the African psyche" during the period of colonization.<sup>1</sup> An internalization of the imperialist idea of native inferiority is probably the worst form of psychic damage, and for Achebe it is a cardinal sin: "If I were God," he says, "I would regard as the very worst our acceptance—for whatever reason—of racial inferiority."<sup>2</sup>

Achebe argues that by expressing the plight of their people and by showing how their sensibilities were traumatized by the colonial encounter, black writers have inevitably involved themselves in a dialectical polemic with Europeans: "They have found themselves drawn irresistibly to writing about black people in a world progressively recreated by white men in their own image, to their glory, and for their profit...."<sup>3</sup> Achebe identifies two authors whose depiction of Africa denigrates indigenous cultures and the existence of whose work draws him into a polemical dialogue. Joyce Cary, he says, perhaps "helped to inspire me, but not in the usual way. I was very angry with his book *Mister Johnson* which was set in Nigeria." Since Achebe felt Cary's depiction of Johnson was not only absurd but also insulting, he was inspired to write a novel based on his own version of the African experience.<sup>4</sup> Achebe is even more emphatic in his criticism of Joseph Conrad:

*Heart of Darkness* is quite simply an objectionable, racist book. What Africa stands for in Conrad's mind is very, very clear. Now if you are not an African you might read it differently—you might read it as the deterioration of the mind of the European. But that is for me only incidental. What is essential is why does it happen in Africa. You know, there is primordial evil there to which the evil in Kurtz responds, and it is that concept of Africa as evil which I am talking about. Now, Conrad may have craft as a novelist though I think even that is overrated. But craft serving this kind of end is unacceptable to me.<sup>5</sup>

Achebe's rather hasty and mistaken rejection of this complex and ironic novel illustrates the powerful negative influence of English literature on the African writer. His reaction against the kind of denigration, then, provides us with the *sociological* imperatives which influence him and other black writers. The targets of the negative reaction are not the formal and aesthetic aspects of colonialist litera-

ture, not the 'craft' of Conrad for instance, but the social and moral attitude and perception of the writer which are ultimately grounded in the colonial sociology. Achebe has articulated very succinctly and emphatically what he considers to be the main obligations of the African writer who attempts to reject this denigrating perspective of the colonialist and to restore the self-esteem of the African.

The prime duty of the African writer, according to Achebe, is to reclaim the dignity of his past. It is his duty to show his own community

...that African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans ; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African people all but lost during the colonial period and it is this that they must now regain. The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity and self-respect. The writer's duty is to help them regain it by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost.<sup>6</sup>

The seriousness and the weight of Achebe's imperative cannot be over-emphasized. Duty is perhaps too mild a word for it. At times he speaks of it as a "revolution" which he has to espouse in order "to help my society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement."<sup>7</sup> At times, he speaks about this obligation in religious terms ; the prolonged struggle to re-establish the lost dignity makes "one's work take on a missionary aspect which some people find offensive or rather disquieting. That does not bother me, because it can't be helped. It is almost a missionary effort to keep stressing that there was something here that was destroyed."<sup>8</sup>

Given the strength of Achebe's desire for restitution, one might reasonably expect the novels to show a marked tendency to romanticize the past. Achebe constantly seeks to avoid the temptation of such idealization because it would violate the integrity of the writer and defeat the attempt to restore the dignity and value of the past by depriving it of credibility.<sup>9</sup> His insistence on the realistic representation of the past is also grounded in what he considers to be the writer's responsibility to his society, which he equates to that of a teacher or a priest.<sup>10</sup> In addition to his desire to refurbish the past,

Achebe is also motivated by the "conviction that the future direction of society is the concern of the artist."<sup>11</sup> Since the values of the traditional society have been destroyed by colonialism and the promises of independence have turned out to be hollow,<sup>12</sup> Achebe feels that in the resultant moral vacuum the writer must become the critic and guardian of social customs and institutions. In short, Achebe wishes the African writer to undertake the awesome task of alleviating the problems of historical petrification and catalepsy.

The negative influence of imperial ideology on Achebe is manifested in his novels through the juxtaposition of colonialist characters' and the narrators' perspectives of indigenous cultures and through Achebe's allusions to the rhetoric of Conrad and Cary. Although the reference to these two writers are sparse, the novels present a gamut of colonialist characters' views which in *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease* condense and crystallize into succinct counterpoints to the narrators' perspectives.

For instance, in *Things Fall Apart* Achebe contrasts two missionaries' methods of proselytizing the natives. The Igbos naturally respond better to the first missionary who, by debating with them the relative merits of Igbo and Christian theologies, implicitly treats them as subjects, whereas they are angered by the second one who sees them as undeserving objects of his exalted evangelical mission. The structure of the novel too echoes this contrast between the two views of natives as subjects and objects. After portraying Okonkwo as the complex subject of an equally complex universe, Achebe presents us, in an ironic paragraph at the end of the novel, with the English District Officer's view of the hero as an object :

The story of this man who had killed a messenger and hanged himself would be interesting reading. One could almost write a whole chapter on him. Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph, at any rate. There was so much else to include, and one must be firm in cutting out details. He had already chosen the title of the book, after much thought : *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*.<sup>13</sup>

Thus through a succinct counterpoint Achebe contrasts our intimate knowledge of Okonkwo as a dignified, complex, contradictory, and tragic subject with the D.O.'s hyperopic and alien view of him as a simplified, categorized, and catalogued object. In this juxtaposition of perspectives is contained the substance of negative influence :

Achebe includes in his novels the colonialist attitude to which he is responding and to which he owes, in a sense, the *raison d'être* of the novel itself.

In *Arrow of God* Achebe similarly incorporates the dialectic of negative influence through more embedded and implicit references to Conrad's preoccupation with "unspeakable rites" and through a juxtaposition of perspectives. *No Longer at Ease* contains explicit comparisons of Kurtz to Mr. Green. However, in this novel the dialectic once more provides the contrapuntal structure. Achebe begins the narrative with the trial of Obi Okonkwo, charged with receiving bribes, and uses the English judge's inability to comprehend how a brilliant and promising young man like Obi can become corrupt as the question to which the novel furnishes an answer. After reinforcing the judge's viewpoint with Mr. Green's racist "explanation" of Obi's turpitude and after providing a very concrete personal and sociological genesis of that turpitude, Achebe ends the novel with a dismissal of the colonialist perspective :

Everybody wondered why. The learned judge, as we have seen, could not comprehend how an educated young man and so on and so forth. The British Council man, even the men of Umuofia, did not know. And we must presume that, in spite of his certitude, Mr. Green did not know either.  
(*NLAE*, 159)

What Achebe is clearly stressing here is that one can only understand Obi's corruption if one views him as the subjective centre of a complex world and that comprehension is impossible if one sees him as an object that belongs to a group categorically dismissed for its inferiority.

Achebe's novels show thus how the colonized man who has been treated as an object sooner or later becomes aware, through a dialectic of shame and pride, of the other's 'look' and of himself as the terminus of that look. He recognizes that the other is indeed judging and treating him as an object, and consequently he becomes ashamed because by allowing himself to be treated as an object he allows his freedom to escape him. Conversely, he becomes aware of the greater freedom of the other-as-subject. This relation, it must be emphasized, is an ontological and not just an epistemological one. Such an awareness clearly lies at the heart of Achebe's fiction and provides one of its major imperatives. His novels are designed to

transform the African's status from that of an object to that of a subject whose complexity the colonialist was incapable of comprehending. This imperative manifests itself not only in the contrapuntal structure of Achebe's fiction but also in the fact that the two emotions which almost exclusively form the character of Okonkwo, and in more complex and modified versions, those of Ezeulu and Obi, are shame and pride. The dialectic of shame and pride provides the basis of characterization as well as the structure of Achebe's fiction.

The colonized man's initial acceptance of his treatment as an object leads to a solidification and alienation of his possibilities, to the utter absence of the world he has previously perceived and organized. Sartre's phenomenological description of the effect on the self produced by the presence of the other is very appropriate for the colonial encounter : "The appearance of the Other in the world corresponds therefore to a fixed sliding of the whole universe, to a decentralization of the world which undermines the centralization which I am simultaneously effecting."<sup>14</sup> This is not only phenomenologically but also socially and politically the case in the colonial situation : because of his military superiority, the colonizer is able to impose his will and his entire world—his social, political, legal, and moral system—on the colonized. Through the disintegration of the Igbo world and the final switch to the District Officer's view of Okonkwo as an interesting object, *Things Fall Apart* clearly depicts such an imposition and the subsequent sliding of the African universe. Similarly, the massive conversion to Christianity at the end of *Arrow of God* marks a more drastic and comprehensive transformation.

The African writer reacts to this denigration of his past and present culture by embarking on a redefinition of self and society through the negation of the negation. Achebe is angered more by the colonial denigration implied in the works of writers such as Cary and Conrad than by other forms of negation, and consequently he portrays in his novels the beauty, dignity, and morality of the Igbo culture before the arrival of the colonizer. Achebe's negation is more literary than that of other writers. Significantly he represents the disintegration of the Igbo universe in terms of the District Officer's consideration of how he will *represent* Okonkwo. Achebe thus aims to replace the European view of Africans with a more authentic and specific, though unidealized, version which is free from the Manichean

allegory : he attempts to replace Joyce Cary's "racial romances" with African realism.

The other fundamental factor involved in the development of African literature is, of course, literacy. It is important not only in the obvious mechanical sense but also because it leads to the development of a historical consciousness and consequently, once again, to the prevalence of realism. According to Ian Watt and Jack Goody,<sup>15</sup> the primary effect of literacy is to disrupt the process of "structural amnesia." That is, by permitting the recording of particular facts and thus making available in time a dense and specific past, literacy will not allow memory, the major mode of temporal mediation in oral cultures, to eliminate facts that are not consonant with or useful for contemporary needs. Literacy also destroys the immediacy of personal experience and the deeper socialization of the world and consequently the totalizing nature of oral cultures. It then leads to the development of historic consciousness by allowing any (literate) individual to scrutinize the fixed past, to distinguish between truth and error, and consequently to cultivate a more conscious, critical, and comparative attitude to the accepted world picture. Such an attitude eventually produces a sense of change and of the human past as an objective reality available to causal analysis, of history as a broad attempt to determine reality in every (diachronic) area of human concern. This in turn permits a distinction between 'history' and 'myth.'<sup>16</sup> For Ernst Cassirer the development of literacy in Greece produced the evolution not only of the historical but also of the "scientific-empiric" culture from a "mythic" one. A similar transition was obviously taking place in Africa during the colonial period, and it provided Achebe the opportunity to depict the end of a 'totalized' oral culture.

This development of historical consciousness creates an ambiance that provides preconditions similar to those which Ian Watt feels were conducive to the rise of the realistic novel in England.<sup>17</sup> As we have just seen, literacy tends to valorize individual experience over the efficacy of a traditional, collective view of the world ; it obviously encourages specificity and particularism ; and by sharpening the historical sense, it allows personality to be defined through its past and present self-awareness and it permits greater individualization through the definition of a particular time and place. Similarly, it encourages the production of authentic accounts of individual

experience—a tendency that is further strengthened by the dialectic of negative influence. Since all these features of realism are obviously present in Achebe's fiction there is no need to illustrate them here. However, unlike the realistic novel in England, Achebe's fiction, in its attempt to overcome the social disintegration bequeathed by colonialism, tends to be concerned with public and highly political issues.

In addition to being characterized by all the formal features of realism, Achebe's novels also represent the very transition from an oral/communal to a literate/individualistic culture which itself is one source of his realism. Oral cultures, which allow their members to experience the totality of the symbol-referent relationship in an immediate and personal manner and thus permit them to socialize the world more deeply than do literate cultures, create a society that is a concrete totality to the extent that all its phenomena are understandable in *individual human* terms and are immediately grasped and understood in terms of their relations to and situation in the total cultural process. Achebe reflects such concrete totality in the conception and organization of his novels. At the level of detail, Achebe's recreation of concrete totality and its disintegration is best exemplified in *Arrow of God* by the substitution of money for yams as spiritual offerings. Within the traditional Igbo culture only a specific species of yam can be offered to Ezeulu in return for his blessing of the crop during the harvest festival. Thus for the Igbo this yam simultaneously represents the economic and spiritual orders of life in that it is at once a mere commodity, produced and consumed mundanely and an object endowed with a specific moral significance. However, the Christian church encourages the Igbos to substitute other commodities or even money for that yam, thereby precipitating a secularization and demythologization of the world that is so essential to capitalist societies based on exchange value. The result of this disintegration is perfectly embodied in *No Longer at Ease* where all human and moral values and relations are reduced to and mediated by money.

This transformation can be seen at the formal level in the very structure of *Things Fall Apart*. In this novel Achebe embodies all the social values, tensions, and contradictions in the personal desires and circumstances of Okonkwo. Thus what Charles R. Larson calls the "situational plot" of this novel,<sup>18</sup> that is, Achebe's use of the



first twelve chapters to describe in detail the Igbo culture rather than to develop a plot, is really designed to allow us to understand Okonkwo as an integral part of the concrete totality. Once we have recognized his function as the emblem of his society, we can better appreciate that his demise at the end represents not just the death of an individual but the falling apart of '*Things*'—that is, of the disintegration of concrete totality, of the perspective that held the "things" together. And it is significant, as we have seen, that this disintegration is marked by the introduction of literacy, that is, by the D.O.'s paragraph about Okonkwo. At the stylistic level, Achebe's reflexive realism manifests itself in his commitment to bring his fictive world to us in all its concrete particularity by ensuring a correspondence of words and things. Through a judicious use of Igbo terms and transliteration of proverbs Achebe is brilliantly successful in evoking the tonality and flavour of Igbo culture. His success in presenting the Igbo reality through the English language without compromising either the reality or the language is an indication of his artistic skill and the complexity of his realism.

Yet there is a profound paradox in this will to particularism which leads Achebe to amalgamate Igbo and English and to represent the specificity of Igbo culture through the alien medium of the English language—a language that was formulated and has been consistently modified by a significantly different experience of reality. William Walsh, in his appreciation of the Igbo society recreated in Achebe's fiction, laments the fact that, in spite of its artistic achievements and the cultivated subtleties of its language, the Igbo culture is transient because it cannot record itself for the future.<sup>19</sup> The irony, then, is that while literacy and the English language contribute to the destruction of this oral culture they also allow writers like Achebe to fix and preserve the vanishing culture by creating an image of it in their novels. Northrop Frye has argued that because of its link with history and temporal context the novel as a dominant form has been confined to Western societies. But now, by destroying the oral cultures in Africa and rendering possible the development of historical consciousness, literacy has made the novel an integral part of the new syncretic African cultures.

A third factor that accounts for the most important and fundamental aspect of Achebe's realism is also produced by the colonial encounter. The collision between European and African cultures

causes the latter to abandon rapidly their traditional, communal social structures and to reorganize themselves slowly and painfully into societies where the individual is paramount. Achebe himself is caught in such a transition, and his novels clearly reflect this kind of transformation. Since both Achebe and Georg Lukács essentially agree about the position and role of writer in society,<sup>20</sup> the latter's criterion for the structural essence of realistic fiction can be aptly applied to an analysis of the former's novels. Lukács argues that since

...human nature is not finally separable from social reality, each narrative detail will be significant to the extent that it expresses the dialectic between man-as-individual and man-as-social-being. It is these tensions and contradictions both within the individual, and underlying the individual's relation with his fellow human beings—all of which tensions increase with the evolution of capitalism—that must form the subject-matter of contemporary realism.<sup>21</sup>

Although Lukács' criterion is prescriptive, it accurately accounts for the fact that Achebe's novels create an impression of what William Walsh calls the "massive cultural destruction" due to the fine balance drawn between a whole society and an impressive individual and to the way in which that individual plays out in his life the fundamental predicaments of his society.<sup>22</sup>

Achebe's heroes, then, are not only enmeshed in a struggle of the self-as-individual and self-as-social-being but are also emblematic of the fundamental strengths and weaknesses, the beauties and cruelties of their societies. The most important internal contradiction, the social estrangement of Achebe's heroes due to their tenacious adherence to values cherished by society, depends for its success on the fact that from the beginning of the narratives the heroes are *potentially* alienated. Each narrative then gradually develops this potential until the protagonists experience the final calamities which result in their absolute alienation. We can best examine Achebe's representation of the inseparability of his protagonists' existence from their social and historical context and of the implication that the whole society collapses with their fall by first analyzing the process of alienation in each novel and then by comparing the progression of estrangement and social disintegration from novel to novel.

In *Things Fall Apart* the potential alienation of its chief protagonist, Okonkwo, is grounded in the conflict of social values embodied in the opposition of father and son. Ashamed of his lazy, improvident, indebted and cowardly father (whom the people call *agabala*—a woman), Okonkwo shuns gentleness, sympathy, aestheticism and accommodation and cultivates only the 'masculine' values—courage, physical strength, martial prowess and resilience. Soon he becomes wealthy through hard work and socially eminent through his courage in battle, but his personality nevertheless remains rooted in a dialectic of shame and pride. At the very source of Okonkwo's success Achebe shows the potential for his alienation and fall in his exclusive reliance on tenacity and violence. The very means of Okonkwo's initial rise to fame, his victory in a difficult wrestling match at the age of eighteen, prefigures his success and demise through the use of physical force. Even his neighbours demonstrate their understanding of and concern for his monomania by characterizing him as "the little bird *nza* who so far forgot himself after a heavy meal that he challenged his *chi*." (TFA, 32-33). In this opposition between Okonkwo and his *chi* (his personal god),<sup>28</sup> in his self-forgetfulness, and in his challenge to his *chi*, the novel clearly depicts the self-alienation, the self-distortion, and the hubris that precedes his fall.

However, by placing the genesis of Okonkwo's character in the social and familial dialectic of the masculine and the feminine, Achebe also depicts the internal tension of the entire society. Okonkwo's character has been moulded by the society's contempt for failure and laziness and its esteem for material and martial success. Achebe focusses and condenses this social desire for power by making Umuofia the most powerful village in the area and then by developing Okonkwo as one of the most successful warriors and farmers in this village. Okonkwo, then, becomes an emblem of the masculine values of the Igbo culture. However, whereas the society balances its masculinity against a nexus of 'feminine' values, such as its art, music, folklore etc, and while it is capable of certain humane gentleness and flexibility, Okonkwo has become rigid, harsh and unfeeling in his pursuit of virility.

Achebe brings this nexus of tensions within society and between Okonkwo and his society to a dramatic climax in the death of Ikemefuna, a teenaged boy who has been singled out for execution in

order to appease the spirits of a murdered woman. The delay of the sentence for three years allows Ikemefuna, who has been placed in the charge of Okonkwo, to develop strong emotional ties with Okonkwo and his family and thus renders the eventual decapitation of the boy by Okonkwo even more horrifying than it would normally be. Achebe further heightens the cruelty of this situation by making Ezeudu, an elder of the clan, repeatedly admonish Okonkwo to disassociate himself from the ritual punishment : "That boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death." (*TFA*, 55-56) He intends to follow Ezeudu's advice, but when the execution is botched and Ikemefuna runs to Okonkwo for protection the latter, dazed by fear, "[draws] his machete and [cuts] him down" because he is "afraid of being thought weak" (*TFA*, 59). Once more Okonkwo refuses to show compassion or contrition : he continues to insist to himself and to his friends that he ought not to be sentimental about the execution and that in any case he had no choice since the punishment had been ordained by the gods. His friend Obierika is unsympathetic : he does not question the actual sentence, but he also cannot condone Okonkwo's complicity in it. Thus Obierika and Ezeudu, both great warriors, demonstrate by their flexibility the increasing alienation of Okonkwo caused by his blind adherence to the limited image of virility.

Through an ironic supernatural coincidence, the accidental death of another teenage boy, Achebe sets the stage for Okonkwo's retreat into and possible modification by the feminine principle. Obierika has warned Okonkwo that his participation in the death of Ikemefuna is a sacrilege towards Ala, the earth goddess, for which he will be punished. The prophecy is fulfilled when, at Ezeudu's funeral, Okonkwo's musket explodes and accidentally kills the former's teenage son. The revenge of Ala is thus manifested in Okonkwo's punishment for the manslaughter :

It was a crime against the *earth goddess* to kill a clansman, and a man who committed it must flee from the land. The crime was of two kinds, *male* and *female*. Okonkwo had committed the female because it had been inadvertent.  
(*TFA*, 117, italics mine)

In this ironic twist of justice Okonkwo and his family are forced to flee to his *motherland* for seven years of exile. This dialectic shift

allows Achebe to test the strength of his protagonist's fixation by providing him with the opportunity of restructuring his personality on a more balanced combination of masculine and feminine influences. However, Okonkwo is not predisposed to undergo any substantial change. He politely ignores his maternal uncle's advice about the need to mollify his harsh personality with the readmission of gentler emotions, and in fact, when this village refuses to kill the missionaries who have just arrived, Okonkwo mocks their effeminate, cowardly accommodation.

By recurrently basing the structure of motivation, values and actions on the opposition of masculinity and femininity, Achebe exposes the underlying tensions of Igbo society that facilitate colonial penetration. Colonial/Christian forces infiltrate Umuofia while Okonkwo—the emblem of Umuofian masculinity, of their ability to resist European incursion—is in exile, that is, alienated from his society and from himself. The invading culture penetrates Igboland through the acquiescence of the feminine, flexible and adaptable elements of Igbo society. Okonkwo's *maternal* village, against his counsel, welcomes the Christians and even provides them with free land. Similarly, Nwoye, who cherishes the feminine values of his culture, converts to Christianity because of his distaste for his father's harsh personality and insistence on virility. The break between father and son becomes irrevocable for Nwoye when Ikemefuna, who had functioned as his elder brother for three years, is killed by Okonkwo. The father too completely rejects his son when the latter becomes a Christian.

By describing the predicament of the father and the son through the imagery of heat and water (see *TFA*, pp. 121 and 137 respectively), Achebe links their alienation. Both of them are deficient ; in order for them to become more balanced individuals they must assimilate some of the cultural elements against which they react so vehemently. Achebe establishes a structure of dialectic alienation between father and son and grounds it firmly in social causality : Okonkwo's reaction to his father is caused by society's relative intolerance of weakness and ineffectuality just as Nwoye's rejection of his father is caused by society's tolerance of the sacrifices of twins and Ikemefuna. Okonkwo and Nwoye react to their society in opposite directions : there is no common ground between them, no synthesis seems achievable. This opposition and imbalance in society, embodied by father and son,

cause it to fall apart under the impact of Western imperialism. The final alienation of Nwoye and Okonkwo marks the disintegration of the traditional Igbo society. Nwoye abandons his father as well as his village whereas Okonkwo, after once more attempting in vain to persuade his people to wage war on the colonial government, commits suicide in order to avoid retribution for his murder of a government messenger.

In keeping with Achebe's irony, the complete alienation of father and son is quite ambivalent. The ambiguity of Okonkwo's social standing is revealed by the dilemma of his friends who cannot give him a decent burial because suicide is a major sin in Igbo ethics, but who still feel that he was "one of the greatest men in Umuofia". Similarly, Nwoye's alienation from his community is based on an elaboration of values that Okonkwo rejects but that the society accepts. The feminine values (the pride in linguistic and poetic skills, in refined ritual, in plastic arts, in social manners etc), the sophisticated application of developed standards that William Walsh discusses, are cherished by the Igbo as much as material success and courage in battle. Father and son together represent the entire gamut of social values, and their different dilemmas reveal how the self is formed, and alienated, by a complex calculus of personal desires and social obligations and pressures. The absoluteness of their alienation through suicide and desertion of community represents the end of a specific—cohesive, totalized, yet contradictory—phase of Igbo culture rather than the complete annihilation of the society; characters like Obierika and Ezeudu, who are capable of flexibility, compromise and adaptation, will ensure the survival of the culture in one form or another. Thus Okonkwo and Nwoye dramatically symbolize the contradictions and tensions between various facets of Igbo society that cause it to succumb easily to the invasion of a militarily and technologically superior civilization.

This basis of Achebe's realism, this grounding of individuals in society and their definition through struggles that are couched in terms of socially significant values, is even more emphatic in *Arrow of God*. In this novel he embodies in one socially and religiously powerful individual the contradiction between the aristocratic and democratic principles inherent in Igbo culture as well as the conflict caused by the desire for personal power and the demands of social obligation. By focusing these problems through Ezeulu, the chief

priest of Umuaro, Achebe convincingly injects the conflict between individual and society into all the mundane details of his narrative.

Ezeulu's power and position as the chief priest of Umuaro, a confederacy of six villages, is itself a product of seemingly social democratic values : in the distant past the six villages, isolated and unprotected against slave raiders, had united by creating a new deity, Ulu, to guard them. Although Ezeulu feels that Ulu created and continues to protect Umuaro, the narrative keeps repeating the fact that in the past deities and their priests had been removed from their office because they had become redundant. Until the end of the novel, the narrator leaves this conflict between religious autocracy and republicanism in an ambiguous state in order to emphasize the socio-religious tensions that lead to an explosive disintegration of Umuaro. If the theological basis of Ezeulu's power is somewhat ambiguous, his function in society leaves no doubt about his pivotal position. For instance, in the ceremony of purification he acts as the spiritual mediator between the people and their God. Since planting and harvesting cannot be undertaken without Ezeulu's blessings, he is also responsible for the socio-economic well-being of Umuaro : next to Ulu, his priest becomes the central embodiment of society's desires, and organization. Achebe infinitely complicates Ezeulu's portrait by connecting his pivotal cultural position with his deep thirst for personal power, which ranges from petty egotistic games he plays on younger members of his village (see, for instance, his hand-shaking game, *AG*, 1) to what he considers the sacrifice of his son Oduche, who is commanded to become a Christian in order to master the secrets of Western culture and technology.

Yet Ezeulu is not a simple megalomaniac. He has a deep sense of obligation to the values and integrity of his culture : when the District Officer offers to establish him as the *political* chief of Umuaro (in order to teach the natives how to rule), the priest contemptuously dismisses the office that is entirely alien to Igbo political practice. Thus his desire for authority is not based entirely on egotism. Ezeulu's arrogance, isolation, and egotism all seem to stem somewhat naturally from his priestly function and position. By balancing his adamant faith in Ulu and his own office with his desire for personal power, the novel creates a deliberate ambiguity : it becomes impossible to determine whether his desire to control others is an idiosyncratic product of his personality or whether it is a natural

extension of the socio-religious power vested in the hereditary priesthood.

Ezeulu's social obligations and his desire for power, which are equally serious concerns for him, could co-exist in a parallel state without any friction if personal and socio-political ambitions and rivalries did not bring them together. However, the existence of such competition entangles the obligation to society and to self in an inextricable manner from the very beginning of the narrative. The priest of another village within the federation of Umuaro is jealous of Ezeulu's precedence over him and is also accurately aware of Ezeulu's desire to dominate, whereas the latter recognizes the vindictive motives behind the objections of other priests but does not sense any impropriety in his own megalomania. The main concern of *Arrow of God* is the gradual and plausible development of the conflict caused by these rivalries, during the course of which the English colonial government intervenes in order to dominate the entire Igbo people.

Ezeulu's contemplation of his real power as Chief Priest prefigures the inevitable conflict between his social obligation and his attempts to dominate others, which finally causes his society to fall apart and irrevocably alienates him from it :

Whenever Ezeulu considered the immensity of his power over the year and the crops and, therefore, over the people he wondered if it was real. It was true he named the day for the feast of the Pumpkin Leaves and for the New Yam feast ; but he did not choose the day. He was merely a watch-man. His power was no more than the power of a child over a goat that was said to be his. ...No ! the Chief Priest of Ulu was more than that, must be more than that. If he should refuse to name the day there would be no festival---no planting and no reaping. But could he refuse ? No Chief Priest had ever refused. So it could not be done. He would not dare. (AG, 3)

Ezeulu, however, does precisely that in the final clash of the novel. Because he cannot see the moon for several months from the prison to which the government has consigned him, the priest is unable to keep count on the lunar calendar by the traditional method. He only resumes the count after his release, and consequently he can theoretically announce the beginning of the harvest, the New Yam feast, several months later than it is due. This literal-mindedness is, of course, a revenge on his people for not honouring him with a delega-



tion and for allowing him to be imprisoned. Ezeulu thus turns his social responsibility into personal power disguised in a religious garb. Just as his obligation and the power are great, so are the consequences dramatic for both society and Ezeulu.

The immediate result is the destruction of the current structure of Igbo society. The people's religiosity prevents them from harvesting the crops without divine blessing through Ezeulu, and consequently they begin to turn to the Church which promises them protection of the Christian God. In fact the Church improves on the traditional Igbo tribute which is one yam per family: the missionaries ask the people to bring "not only yams, [but] any crop whatsoever or livestock or money" (AG, 246). This introduction of monetary fluidity into the traditional socio-religious system is a certain mark of its disintegration. The displacement of Ulu by the Christian God and the replacement of the symbolic and usage values, implied in the socially codified offering of one specific species of yam imbued with religious meaning, by the metonymic exchange value of money, which is bereft of any intrinsic or symbolic value, define the end of the traditional culture. While the society and culture of Umuaro are disintegrating, Ezeulu, tormented by guilt for his actions, gradually drifts toward madness, which, to the extent that it prevents him from communicating coherently with others, becomes the final manifestation of his social alienation.

By choosing an individual whose function is pivotal to his society and by developing his conflict of obligations to self and to society in such a way that the final result is extreme for both, Achebe has developed in *Arrow of God* the most dramatic yet plausible version of the dialectic between man-as-individual and man-as-social-being. Although this dialectic is less dramatic in *Things Fall Apart*, it is more tense there because of Okonkwo's personality. If this dialectic approximates a tragic stature in these two novels, in *No Longer at Ease* it becomes farcical, but it never disappears: it is central to all of Achebe's novels.

The farcical nature of the struggle in *No Longer at Ease* is due primarily to the devaluation of traditional life in a society that is now thoroughly colonial. The prime 'value' of this new society is money, and the prime mode of obtaining the currency of this value is extortion, a given, pre-existent fact that permeates all levels and modes of life. Although the genesis of corruption is not provided in

this novel, it is shown in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, and we must examine it briefly since an understanding of its nature and origin is important to our appraisal of the conflict in *No Longer at Ease*.

The corruption in the previous novels is not generated deliberately by the colonial administration ; nevertheless it is an inevitable result of the nature of colonial authority. The English District Officers are almost completely ignorant of indigenous culture and languages, whereas the Africans are equally ignorant of the English institutions and values that are being imposed upon them. In this gap of ignorance between the governors and governed, deception and bribery flourish in a healthy and vigorous manner. For instance, the District Officer in *Things Fall Apart* levies a fine of 200 bags of cowries from the people of Umuofia, but his messengers increase the sum to 250 bags and keep the difference since they are confident that the absence of any substantial communications between the government and the people ensures that such corruption will go undetected. Corruption, then, is caused by the fact that there is no coherent cultural connection between the government and the public : the English imposed on the Igbos a series of institutions that have been generated in a radically different culture.

In the fifty years or so between the setting of *Things Fall Apart* and the time of *No Longer at Ease*, around the 1950s, the corruption has permeated all aspects of life, and consequently respect for the new political and economic institutions is non-existent :

In Nigeria the Government was "they." It had nothing to do with you or me. It was an alien institution and people's business was to get as much from it as they could without getting into trouble. (*NLE*, 38)

Not only political government but other cultural institutions and practices, such as labour (*NLE*, 79), the family (*NLE*, 128), and even sexual responsibility (*NLE*, 136), are in an advanced stage of disintegration. No social product or service has any intrinsic merit any more, and the entire population seems to be motivated only by money—the medium of exchange has quickly become the goal of human activity and the measure of a man's social and moral worth.

In this corrupt and disintegrating society Achebe puts as his chief protagonist a rather quixotic idealist whose naïveté in all walks of life is best symbolized by the contrast between a melodramatic

and clichéd poem about Nigeria, which he had written in England, and the slums of Lagos where he recalls that poem. The juxtaposition between the scene in the poem,

How sweet it is to be beneath a tree  
At eventime and share the ecstasy  
Of jocund birds and flimsy butterflies;

and the scene in the slums, where from a wide-open storm drain next to a meat stall comes the "very strong smell of [a dog's] rotting flesh" (*NLE*, 22-23), typifies the idealism of Obi and the reality of Lagos. Characteristically, Obi takes himself very seriously and pontificates about how "our people have a long way to go" (*NLE*, 40).

The crucial aspect of Obi's idealism and naïveté is demonstrated in his approach to corruption: he believes that it could be easily cured either if a few men at the top would set good examples or if a benevolent dictator were to take over the government and eradicate bribery and extortion. In his typically moralistic and self-righteous manner, he considers himself one of those enlightened people who will set the correct example by never accepting a bribe. After he has refused the first one he is offered, he compares his elation to the "feeling he had some years ago in England after his first woman". She had complimented him by equating him to a tiger, and now, after the encounter with the briber, he experiences a similar sensation. The irony of this inappropriate analogy is that a sexual consummation initiated him from innocence into experience, whereas the rejection of the bribe prevents him from experiencing the real world: he remains engulfed in his own moralism and vanity.

Obi's real initiation into an experience of the world, and consequently into the conflict between allegiance to self and society, develops gradually through his social obligations and his own spendthrift habits. The tenacious ability of his naïveté to withstand the onslaught of social demands, which are made ultimately in terms of money, produces a slow and tense initiation which, ironically, is completed by the time he reaches the nadir of his alienation. Obi is unable to resolve the major conflict between his moral stand on corruption and his financial needs. In spite of his substantial salary, he cannot meet his own needs and reimburse the Umuofia Progressive Union for the student loan that he had been granted. As soon as

he borrows some money he faces additional expenses for his mother's two operations and his girlfriend's abortion. Yet because he scornfully rejects his friends' advice that he accept bribes, he becomes trapped between his moralism and his social obligation. A similar conflict between Obi's moral attitude and social prejudice clarifies his precarious and flimsy position. He wishes to marry Clara, but because she belongs to a slave caste his parents, friends and the Union advise him against it. In the face of mounting opposition it becomes clear that his desire to marry Clara is based not on a conscious decision and a deliberate awareness of the consequent social disapprobation but on a rather vague moral notion of how things ought to be. His resolution, which, he realizes, "comes from the periphery, and not the center" (*NLE*, 130), soon crumbles, and the opposition between him and society over Clara dissolves once again into a momentary concern—expenses for her abortion and the ensuing medical complications.

Thus all oppositions between Obi and society reduce themselves into demands for money, into the metonymic confusion of bourgeois society. Obi proves to be completely ineffectual in managing his money which mediates between his personal needs and his social obligations. Unable to conserve his financial resources or to save his affair with Clara, Obi succumbs to the pressures of a corrupt and restricted society and easily abandons his moral scruples. However, he is so ineffectual that he even bungles his acceptance of bribes, which he has now begun to receive, and consequently he is trapped, tried, and convicted by the government.

In this seemingly simple novel Achebe has constructed some complex ironies around the questions of social coherence and alienation. He has created a society that is estranged from itself, that is rendered powerless by the fact that it has no control over its own organization, and that has no allegiance to its government. Corruption, predicated on the absence of social cohesion, loyalty and integrity, is then an index of this alienation, but the people in this society have come to accept disorganization and bribery as normal, and in relation to that norm it is Obi, with his callow integrity and moralism, who is alienated. The friction caused by his attitudes increases as he comes into conflict with the demands to repay his obligations to society and to conform to its prejudices, and eventually it leads him to examine his motives and idealism. And in so doing he

discovers "a good deal that he could only regard as sheer humbug" (NLE, 146). When his mother dies Obi feels a release from guilt and senses the end of his moralism : "Beyond death there are no ideals and humbug, only reality. The impatient idealist says : 'Give me a place to stand and I shall move the earth.' But such a place does not exist. We all have to stand on the earth itself and go with her at her pace." (NLE, 156) This initiation from innocence into experience reaches its turning point in the trial and conviction of Obi. For by being convicted and being labelled a criminal, he becomes thoroughly alienated from the ideals of the colonizing regime, represented here by the English court system, and at the same time he becomes an initiate of the corrupt colonized society which, as the doctor who performs Clara's abortion says, is comprised entirely of criminals (NLE, 138). Adherence to his idealistic values, which are strongly influenced by his Christian and English education, alienates him from the Nigerian society and conversely, estrangement from the values represented by the English court reconciles and initiates him into the "criminal" African society.

This kind of irony can permeate the dialectics of man-as-individual and man-as-social-being only in a colonial society where confusion is caused by two incompatible value systems and where a moral vacuum is created by the absence of a legitimate cultural authority. Whereas the societies in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* have a sound and viable set of cultural values which are just beginning to crack under the pressure of European influence and whereas alienation in those novels is caused by the ossification of indigenous values, the society in *No Longer at Ease* has disintegrated and is characterized by incoherence, and the alienation is then caused by adherence to integrity which is foreign to that *colonized* society. In all the novels, however, alienation is caused essentially by the espousal of goals and ambitions that are incongruent with the changing social praxis.

Achebe's novels are thus constantly preoccupied with the relation of man to his society. They are essentially in the tradition of realism, that is, they recognize that

every action, thought and emotion of human beings is inseparably bound up with the life and struggle of the community, i.e. with politics ; whether the human beings themselves are conscious of this, unconscious of it or even trying to escape from it, objectively their actions, thoughts and emotions nevertheless spring from and run into politics.<sup>24</sup>

We have seen in our analysis of the novels that Achebe refuses to divide the human personality into mutually exclusive private and public sectors ; all the private dilemmas, ambitions and understandings of his heroes are firmly grounded in public interaction. In fact, the problems of his characters are only comprehensible in terms of the respective public values that surround the individuals. This insistence on representing the individual as a complex social being is the basis of a realism that is further strengthened by his deliberate depiction of the totality of Igbo culture in response to the denigration inherent in the colonial perspectives : Achebe does not attempt to justify the moral soundness of Igbo culture by idealizing it. Realism, then, is his aesthetic as well as ethical response not only to the colonialist views of African societies but also to the social dilemma of African cultures which are attempting to come to terms with the disorganization that is the legacy of colonialism.

Yet in spite of Achebe's realism his novels are unable to escape or transcend the social dilemma to which he is an heir. His realism, based on his view of the symbiotic relation between the individual and society and augmented by the calm neutrality of his style (the absence of sentimentality, resentment or a vengeful subjective bias, the judicious use of narrative distance and an economy and simplicity of presentation), as well as the richness and complexity of the cultures and individuals that he depicts, makes Achebe the best contemporary African writer. Yet despite the objectivity which accounts for his successful writing, Achebe's fiction remains a complex and subtle reflection of his predicament as a writer in a culture that is still experiencing a radical transformation. The subjective element does not distort or colour the narrative details of each novel ; it can only be seen through a comparison of the stature and alienation of his heroes which subsequently reveals the conflict between traditional and transitional values that pervade all his novels.

In *Things Fall Apart* there is no substantial disagreement between the values of Umuofia and Okonkwo even though he becomes alienated from his society. The Umuofian community is proud, martial, self-contained and self-sufficient ; it is characterized by the egocentricity of a healthy, self-perpetuating organism. Okonkwo, with his adamant will, his reliance on physical force and anger, and his pride and courage, manifested finally in his suicide, is quite

compatible with his society up to a point. They diverge in their ability to compromise : whereas the society, motivated by a healthy instinct for self-preservation, is willing to change and accommodate the new militarily superior culture, Okonkwo is an inflexible monomaniac who destroys himself through his compulsive preoccupation with martial values. Thus from the societal and narrative viewpoints Okonkwo's absolute alienation, his death, represents the tragic fall of a man admirable in every way except for his ossified 'masculinity'. In mourning his death, Umuofia grieves the end of its own ascendancy and its unique culture. There is thus a certain grandeur and poignance in his fall ; the only criticism that Achebe implies throughout the narrative is a mild regret of Okonkwo's rigidity and unwillingness to compromise.

In contrast to the heroic stature of Okonkwo the position of Ezeulu at the end of *Arrow of God* (set in a somewhat later period than *Things Fall Apart*)<sup>26</sup> is neither as grand nor as tragic. Society now behaves in a less proud and self-sufficient manner than its counterpart in the previous novel. A more 'feminine' society, with its stress on art and religion, Umuaro is already predisposed towards compromise : the very foundation of Umuaro, a complex union of six villages, constitutes an accommodation ; so does its agreement to provide labour for the road building projects of the colonial government ; and the massive conversion to Christianity at the end of the novel is a radical concession. Ezeulu too believes in and urges compromise : he mediates the quarrel between Umuaro and Okperi, attempts to negotiate with the colonial government and forces one of his sons to become a Christian. But as all these examples illustrate, he only accommodates external forces—within Umuaro itself he wishes to be the absolute master. When the delegation of elders requests that Ezeulu readjust the calendar in order to permit harvesting, the latter callously adheres to his own schedule. Thus a major rift, an irreconcilable opposition, develops between Ezeulu and his society. Ezeulu's madness, that is, his inability to communicate coherently with others, is symbolic of his social alienation, and his subsequent displacement and ultimately that of Ulu arouses neither pity nor awe. Umuaro views his madness as a vindication of the society's democratic principles and his fall as its salvation from starvation. The people have little time or inclination to sympathize with the mad, arrogant priest as they busy themselves with the

changing situation. At the end of the novel, Achebe shifts the focus from the plight of Ezeulu to that of society, thereby depriving the priest of the stature enjoyed by Okonkwo in the previous novel.

The stature of the hero and the power and integrity of society are diminished drastically in *No Longer at Ease*. In this novel the community is completely compromised—it is thoroughly corrupt and alienated. Pride has become snobbery, personal interdependence has turned into bothersome obligation, and all other values are now mediated by and reduced to monetary considerations. Within this society of “criminals” Achebe places a quixotic character whose weaknesses, callow moralism, flimsy sense of superiority and lack of conviction and willpower ironically parallel the social disintegration. In this highly ironic novel Obi’s fall, his integration into the community through the initiation of criminal conviction, can hardly be called tragic. Society views his trial as the product of his own ineptitude in receiving bribes, and his moralism is for them no more than a curious anomaly. People neither mourn his plight nor do they see any significance in his conviction. In contrast to the fall of his grandfather, Okonkwo of *Things Fall Apart*, Obi’s demise is a paltry farce.

Viewed in this historical progression from grandeur to farce, Achebe’s novels demonstrate a nostalgia for the past. The society and individuals in the precolonial past of *Things Fall Apart* are clearly superior compared to the social chaos and moral vacuum of the pre-independence Nigeria of *No Longer at Ease*; as social disruption, caused by the impact of colonialism and the novelty of European cultures, progresses rapidly from the setting in the first novel to that in the third, so conversely do the stature of the heroes and the integrity of the culture diminish. Achebe’s fourth novel, *A Man of the People* (which we have not examined because, strictly speaking, it is not concerned with a colonized society) further continues this trend of degeneration from grandeur to farce.

Achebe’s nostalgia must be distinguished from the romantic ethnology of the Negritude movement, for, unlike the latter, he neither portrays an idealized, monolithic, homogenized, and pasteurized ‘African’ past, nor does he valorize indigenous cultures by reversing the old colonial manichean allegory as, for instance, Leopold Senghor does. Just as Achebe carefully limits his fiction to a specific culture (the Igbo society in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* and the more



mixed community of Lagos in *No Longer at Ease*), so he diligently avoids idealization by including in his fiction an implicit criticism of the less admirable aspects of social and individual life. Even though his fiction eschews a perfect utopia, a lost golden age, it does nevertheless manifest a powerful, but problematic nostalgia for the past.

The problematics of Achebe's nostalgia are reflected by his ambivalent attitude towards his characters and their respective societies. All three of his major protagonists fall not only because they are alienated from their society but more importantly because their personalities and characters become ossified around certain traditional values: Okonkwo, as we have seen, falls because he is only capable of basing his actions on 'masculine,' martial values; Ezeulu becomes mad because he forgets the symbolic nature of his function as the priest of Ulu and instead literally identifies his personal whims and desires with the god whom he represents; and Obi is apprehended and convicted for bribery because the tenacity of his naïve idealism prevents him from adjusting himself to the practical considerations of a corrupt social praxis. All three characters are inflexible, calcified monomaniacs in their different ways. However, they all represent values that, from their own social as well as from more general viewpoints, are in themselves substantial and respectable. Okonkwo's pride, courage, and diligence are perfectly laudable, as are Ezeulu's desires to uphold the principles and rituals of his theology and religion and to augment the power of Ulu and eventually of Umuaro by appropriating some of the 'magical' power from the Christian-colonial culture. Obi's valorization of honesty, integrity fairness etc. represent the common aspirations of all cultures. Thus while Achebe criticizes the petrification of his protagonists, he seems to be quite sympathetic to their values. The ironic fall of the characters despite their sound values is a fundamental characteristic of all of Achebe's fiction.

The hero's alienation from society in the course of his demise, the development of the rift between the individual and society, clarifies Achebe's ambivalence. While the characters perish due to their ossification, the societies to which they belong manage to survive because of their adaptability. Umuofians do not follow Okonkwo's aggressive lead because they understand perfectly well that such a course is suicidal—they know that colonial troops have annihilated another village, Abame, which attempted to resist the European

invasion. Similarly, Umuaro chooses Christianity in order not to perish from starvation, while the society of Lagos is entirely pre-occupied with the daily business of 'survival', that is, with earning money and getting ahead. In the process of adapting and insuring their continuity these societies naturally undergo a drastic modification and abandon their traditional values.

By changing, these societies become prey to the problems of historical catalepsy because assimilation of European values obviously does not mean that the entire Western culture, including its own coherence, direction etc, will be transferred automatically or completely to the colonized country. The process of adaptation is necessarily a gradual and painful one during which various aspects of the indigenous and European cultures are combined and during which the colonized or 'independent' society gropes its way towards a new synthesis ; as Balandier has pointed out, this is a period and a process of great ambiguity.<sup>26</sup> Thus colonialism necessarily produces in its subject society a period of profound cultural and historical hiatus, a time of chaos during which, as Achebe says, old values no longer apply and new ones have not yet been found. *No Longer at Ease* portrays such a society paralyzed by corruption, cynicism towards the colonial government, confusion about old and new values, a lack of social coherence and an absence of historical direction. Achebe points to the anxiety, frustration and confusion of such a period by drawing the titles of two novels, *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease*, from two modernist poems, W.B. Yeats's "The Second Coming" and T.S. Eliot's "The Journey of the Magi", that address themselves to moments of a radical historical transformation.

Thus Achebe's novels can be seen as products of a conflict between the desire to retain the traditional values, represented by the ossified characters, and the recognition, manifested in the adaptability of society, that change and assimilation are absolutely necessary for survival. The characterization of Okonkwo and Ezeulu as men who embody the best values in their culture and of Obi as a champion of a basic universal morality, represents Achebe's desire for the integrity and heroism of the past, for values other than the corrupt ones that flourish in the moral vacuum of pre-independence Nigeria. But the fall of these heroes through their petrification and society's willingness to adapt represent Achebe's recognition that the desired values are calcified, that they are no longer viable. Yet the progressive degenera-

tion of community from novel to novel demonstrates his awareness of the disorientation, incoherence, corruption and lack of direction that characterizes all colonized and post-colonial societies. Thus assimilation leads to catalepsy while retention of traditional culture produces petrified people. The conflict between the need to change and the desire to retain the traditional culture constitutes the ambivalent and problematic nature of Achebe's nostalgia.

Achebe's novels can be best understood as analyses *and* products of the historical problems created by colonization. The European control of African societies, the violent collision between different cultures, and the temporary deprivation of African independence inevitably created confusion and a subsequent lack of direction in the colonized culture. Achebe's fiction examines this period of cultural conflict in order to restore the pride of Africans in their own past by demonstrating that indigenous societies, contrary to colonial claims, did have their own morality and cultural sophistication. By so doing his novels hope to enhance the Africans' understanding of their present and thereby to provide a more definite direction to their future.

Yet it would seem that the problem of historical catalepsy is more obstinate and intricate than one might imagine, for in writing about that period Achebe seems to have been trapped by the ambivalent nostalgia which characterizes his vision of the past (and which is also manifested in the irony of his writing novels about *Igbo* culture in *English*). His writing seems as yet unable to proceed beyond this nostalgia and the problem of historical catalepsy : the worlds of his novels degenerate from the heroism of the distant past to the farce of the near past and the present. They do not proceed beyond the present to depict a positive vision of the future or to valorize some specific cultural attributes for future cultivation. Despite his view that the writer is responsible for the future direction of society, he has not yet attempted to undertake that difficult task in his fiction. I do not wish to imply that the dilemma of historical catalepsy can be attributed to Achebe's shortcomings as a *writer*, for what he has written is excellent. But I must stress that the question of historical direction is a pervasive cultural problem to which Achebe and all Third World writers and intellectuals are heir. Achebe must be credited with the most sustained exploration of this problem, for he

vision of a problematic African past that spanned the period of colonization.

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NOTES

- 1 My own unpublished interview of Chinua Achebe, November, 1975.
- 2 Chinua Achebe, "The Novelist as a Teacher", in G.D. Killam, ed., *African Writers on African Writing* (Evanston, Ill., 1973), p. 3.
- 3 Chinua Achebe, "The Black Writer's Burden", *Presence Africaine*, 59 (1966), p. 135.
- 4 Chinua Achebe, "Conversation with Achebe", interview by Lewis Nkosi, *Africa Report*, 9, No. 7 (July, 1964), p. 20.
- 5 Own interview.
- 6 Chinua Achebe, "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation", in Killam, p. 8.
- 7 Chinua Achebe, "The Novelist as a Teacher", p. 3.
- 8 Own interview.
- 9 See "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation", pp. 9-10.
- 10 See Achebe's "The Novelist as a Teacher" and his interview with Ernest and Pat Emenyonu, "Accountable to Our Society", *Africa Report* (May, 1972), p. 27.
- 11 Own interview.
- 12 The writer "found that the independence his country was supposed to have won was totally without content. The old white master was still in power. He had got himself a bunch of black stooges to do his dirty work for a commission." See Achebe's "The African Writer and the Biafran Cause", In his *Morning Yet on Creation Day: Essays* (New York, 1975), p. 145.
- 13 Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (Greenwich, Conn., 1969), p. 191. All further references to this novel and to *Arrow of God* (New York, 1969) and *No Longer at Ease* (Greenwich, Conn., 1969) will be incorporated in the text of the article. The novels will be abbreviated as *TFA*, *AG* and *NLE* respectively.
- 14 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York, 1956), p. 255.
- 15 The following appraisal of the effects of literacy is based on their article "The Consequences of Literacy", in Jack Goody, ed. *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (London, 1968), pp. 27-68.
- 16 I do not mean to imply here, or elsewhere, that Africa did not have a *history* during the period when oral cultures prevailed. Obviously it did. But it is equally clear that the historical *consciousness* can function infinitely better with the aid of literacy. Nor do I mean to imply that what Cassirer calls "mythic" cultures are unable to reason logically or causally—Lévi-Strauss has demonstrated in *The Savage Mind* that they can.
- 17 Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley, Calif., 1964). The first chapter

- 18 Charles R. Larson, *The Emergence of African Fiction* (Bloomington, 1971), p. 42.
- 19 William Walsh, *A Manifold Voice: Studies in Commonwealth Literature* (New York, 1970), p. 49.
- 20 Compare, for instance, the following two statements by Lukács and Achebe respectively : "Talent and character [of a writer] may be innate ; but the manner in which they develop, or fail to develop, depends on the writer's interaction with his environment, on his relationship with other human beings. His life is a part of his time ; no matter whether he is conscious of this, approves of it or disapproves. He is part of a larger social and historical whole." (*Realism in Our Time: Literature and the Class Struggle*, New York, 1964, pp. 54-55) "The Writer lives in society, he lives with his fellows and he is nothing except a member of society. What we regard as humanness is fostered by association with other people. The tool that we use, the basic tool which is language, is made by society and therefore you cannot really arrive at whatever it is you are looking for by gazing inwards." (Own interview)
- 21 Lukács, *Realism in Our Time*, p. 75.
- 22 Walsh, *A Manifold Voice*, p. 52.
- 23 The *Chi* is an extremely complex and fluid concept which is difficult to define succinctly. M.E.N. Njaka summarizes it as follows : "A personal spiritual being ; the manifestation of the Supreme Being in man. The chi is man's other self, his spiritual double, and the essence of the Supreme Deity in beings and things." (*Igbo Political Culture*, Evanston, Ill., 1974, p. 154). Each man has a unique chi functioning as his alter-ego. For a more thorough definition of this concept see Chinua Achebe's "Chi in Igbo Cosmology", in his *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, pp. 159 ff.
- 24 Georg Lukács, *Studies in European Realism* (New York, 1964), p. 9.
- 25 I have analyzed Achebe's novels in the order determined by the historical period which they examine rather than in the order of their publication. I have done so to clarify his attitude to the past as it progresses from the initial encounter between the English and Igbo cultures to the problems of pre-independence Nigeria.
- 26 George Balandier, *Ambiguous Africa: Cultures in Collision* (New York, 1966).

*M.S. Pati*  
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## HISTORY AND THE NOVEL IN INDIA THE ORIYA HISTORICAL NOVEL : A CASE STUDY<sup>1</sup>

The rise of the historical novel on the foundation of a predominantly realistic tradition of novel-writing can be explained by reference to a certain new outlook on reality, an outlook which considered reality to be historical, to be a continuous process of change. But with the disintegration of the idea of 'reality', writing of historical novels became increasingly difficult towards the end of the nineteenth century. The mainstream of twentieth century prose fiction is concerned either with expressing the nuances of a complex mental reality or with the 'static human situation' which has nothing much to do with history or the accepted tenets of realism. Attempts at writing historical novels in the twentieth century do not aim at rendering a sense of the historical process, as 'history' and 'reality' both have become extremely problematic concepts.

In the Indian context, however, the historical novel continues to be a viable and promising literary form. Although modern Indian literature, particularly the novel-form, matured under the direct influence of Western realism, the development of historical novel has been markedly different from that in the source tradition ; for a variety of reasons realism continues to be the dominant strain in Indian literature at a time when in Europe it has given way to a number of alternative, subversive traditions. It is still quite possible on the part of the Indian creative writer to explore the past reality with a considerable degree of confidence and attempt a significant creative synthesis of history and fiction. At the same time, it may also be noted that the Indian writer has never really succeeded in projecting a historical conception of life as the fully realized historical novels in

to struggle with the basic problem of reconciling fact with fiction which exercised the earliest practitioners of the genre in Europe. An enquiry into these divergences brings one to perceive certain fundamental dissimilarities in the evolution of the two cultures and offers an insight into their working today.

In order that the growth of historical novels in the Indian literary tradition may be properly appreciated, it is first of all necessary to relate it to the growth of historical consciousness among Indian people under the British rule. The coming of the British brought about far-reaching structural changes in the more or less static and hierarchical Oriya society. The process of transformation was painful since it was not impelled by forces from within the Oriya society but was imposed from above by colonial rule. The most significant consequence of this rule in Orissa was the decay of the village. It lost its self-sufficiency and its inhabitants were reduced to abject poverty through the British revenue experiments. In addition, the compulsions of colonial administration brought into being a new educated elite for whom the proficiency in the English language guaranteed a secure livelihood and an elevated social status. The emergence of the new elite was accompanied by the decline of the traditional aristocracy and the culture so assiduously preserved by it.

The whole of the nineteenth century was a period of crisis for Orissa. Parts of what was in the past a sprawling empire were attached to different provinces for the sake of the administrative convenience of the British. In spite of the absence of political integration, however, a cultural unity sustained by a common language and a shared tradition held the people of Orissa together. This fundamental sense of unity which operated at the level of the culture was later manifested politically in the form of a demand for the unification of Orissa. It is important to recognize that this was more than a political aspiration. For the elite it was a compelling necessity, a way out of the sense of insecurity which assumed overpowering proportions during the nineteenth century. A series of famines had shattered an already weak economy. The administration of the state lay in the hands of people from neighbouring states who were far from sympathetic towards the people of Orissa. Moreover, the influence of a liberal Western education, ideas

educated Oriyas. Thus one can find the emergence of Oriya nationalism in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

National self-consciousness involves the search for a national identity. This forced the modern Oriya elite to turn to the past for inspiration since the present offered very little to sustain a national pride. The historical consciousness generated by Oriya nationalism contained an element of uncritical self-glorification and had its roots in legends, not carefully examined facts: history became important as a source of inspiration, not as an entirely new way of looking at reality, as in Renaissance England for instance.

Modern Oriya literature, particularly modern Oriya prose fiction, owes its origin to the interaction between the traditional culture and the compulsions of colonial rule. The need to participate in the colonial administration and the religious activities of the missionaries led to the evolution of modern Oriya prose. Contact with Western culture and literature made the literate population more aware of the immediate present and its problems and less interested in the past, and the age-old monopoly of verse was broken.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the coming of the printing press had changed the method of transmission of literary creations. But the contrast between the beginning of realistic prose fiction in Oriya and that in the European context during the Renaissance has to be kept in mind. In Europe the rise of realistic prose fiction was accompanied by a conscious rejection of romance, allegory and pastoral, forms that tended to idealize ordinary life. But modern Oriya literature never sought to break away from a similar tradition. Though there certainly existed a tension between the demands of the present and the pressure of the past, the tendency to reconcile them was evident in the works that came to be written during the last decades of the nineteenth century. This is why elements of earlier art forms like the fable, romance and the fairy tale co-exist with the concern for realism in the earliest Oriya novels.

It is important to note that the earliest Oriya novels were historical romances. It is only later that the realistic strain was manifested, in the novels of Fakirmohan Senapati. The historical strain was never really completely submerged in the tradition of realism and continues to be a significant part of the Oriya literary scene. The rise of the historical novel in Orissa cannot be explained wholly in



Oriya novel, *Padmamali* gives very little evidence of a patriotic glorification of the past. On the other hand, it treats history as a source of exciting material for writing novels. An element of patriotism, however, is evident in Rama Shankar's *Bibasini* which follows *Padmamali*. And Oriya nationalism constitutes the dominant concern in *Lachhama*. What exercises the author of the first Oriya novel is the fact-fiction tension, the relation between history as a set of well-established facts and the entertaining, invented world of fiction. He views himself as a truth-teller and asserts this in no uncertain terms in his prefaces. Umesh Chandra Sarkar's conception of history is accepted by almost all writers of historical novels up to the present day. Most writers of historical novels betray a certain uneasiness while resolving this fact-fiction dichotomy. They seem to be pre-occupied with the idea of history as a set of incontrovertible facts about the past, and consider fiction to be concerned with events that never took place but had to be imagined.

But their tendency to treat artistically a specific historical past has to be explained in terms of a national self-consciousness. The earliest Oriya novelists were influenced by the Bengali historical romances of Bankimchandra Chatterjee. Bankimchandra, in turn, was deeply influenced by the historical novels of Scott and Lytton. Bankimchandra's main effort was directed at recreating the image of a heroic past, a Hindu golden age based on the annals of Rajput valour. He rewrote Todd by importing into a broad historical vision a definite nationalistic and religious dimension. The evocation of a Hindu past inevitably brings in memories of the Muslim and Christian conquests of India and, thus, a religious note is struck. By contrast, the earliest Oriya historical novels are remarkably secular. They depict the suffering of the Oriya people caused both by the Muslim and Hindu invasions and seek to project the periods of crisis in the history of Orissa. The religious theme makes its appearance much later. An analysis of four major Oriya novels dealing with historical themes will reveal the nature of the Oriya artist's struggle with the fact-fiction dichotomy and of his attempt to achieve a vision of history.

## II

*Padmamali*<sup>a</sup>, published in the year 1881, is the first Oriya novel.

first historical romance in Oriya.<sup>4</sup> He chose a historical theme and sought to express it through a fictional mode.

*Padmamali* is structured mainly around two major conflicts : political and romantic. The political conflict relates to a feud between two small kingdoms in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Into this has been woven the struggle for the throne of Nilagiri between the widowed queen mother and the younger brother of the deceased king. But this conflict is peripheral—it appears as if the author is shrewdly attempting to pass off a romantic tale as a real-life story by providing it a certain historical context. Love between the daughter of an official of the kingdom of Nilagiri and the King of Kaptipada furnishes for the novel its central conflict. The political conflict merges into the romantic one when the latter reaches its crisis. The heroine is abducted and hidden away in a garden by a lewd and corrupt relation of the queen mother, and in order to rescue her, the King of Kaptipada attacks Nilagiri with support from Harihar Bhramar Dev, an aspirant to that throne. This conflict is resolved through the intervention of the British political agent. Along with the villain some rebels too are punished and the novel closes with the happy union and marriage of the hero and the heroine.

Though the structure of the novel is finally reduced to a simple romance scheme of love-separation-union, the action does not develop in a plain, linear fashion and the author makes use of a number of devices—commentary of a narrative voice, situations from ordinary life, antecedents of characters, evocation of atmosphere and so on. He is not merely narrating a romantic tale, he is structuring a number of incidents and experiences of many characters and attempting to provide them a logically satisfying resolution. It is needless to say that the organization lacks the sophistication of a later novelist, but at the same time, it has to be appreciated that this attempt is of great historical importance for the tradition of Oriya novels.

The world of *Padmamali* embraces two widely separated spheres : the sphere of history which involves oppression of ordinary people by corrupt feudal authorities, a battle and the intervention of the British political agent, the trial and punishment of the evil-doers ; and the sphere of romance which centres round the love between the King of Kaptipada and the daughter of an ordinary official. The author seems to be preoccupied with the accurate presentation of historical

claims that he has tried his best not to deviate from them. But, as we have seen, history is confined here to a few events ; the main bulk of the novel comprises the story of romantic love revolving round a few characters. It so happens that some of them are historical. But, obviously, history does not shape them. It might appear from the author's statement at the beginning of Chapter 23 that he is aware of history as a shaping process. He speaks there of the readers' 'moral' expectations and how they conflict with the relentless facts of history which involves unmerited suffering. He seems to be using history to draw some kind of a broad moral out of it. Its presence is hardly significant—it is merely a background and is not delineated as anything special or different from the history of the characters which constitutes the story of the novel.

### III

*Padmamali* is followed by *Bibasini* (1891), a historical romance by Rama Shankar Ray. Unlike *Padmamali* with its conventional pattern of love-separation-union, *Bibasini* is organized at two distinct levels : a main plot which is centred on love and adventure, and a subsidiary plot which works out the theme of social protest. It is true that the subplot has not been very carefully constructed, and its resolution appears to be rather melodramatic. But through it the author is seriously engaged in projecting a picture of the social reality under Marhatta misrule—a tragic setting against which he unfolds the romantic tale dealing with love, adventure and sacrifice. The novelist also seeks to make the tensions in the romantic tale grow out of the historical situation in the subplot.

The structure of *Bibasini* may be seen to have been built around two conflicts : the larger historical conflict which involves the despotic *Subedar* and the growth of popular protest, and the romantic conflict which involves Raghunath Pattnaik, Kalabati, Rasakala, and Mayadhar. In fact, the manner in which the world of romance is rendered as an inseparable part of the larger historical conflict constitutes one of the most significant advancements in the realm of the historical novel: *Bibasini* begins with the scene of dacoits plundering the houses of people who have grown rich by exploiting the poor villagers, and together with it introduces the romantic plot by organizing an episode of abduction. These two strains are

thereafter developed simultaneously, imparting to the novel a structure that is far more complex than that of *Padmamali*. The reader's attention is constantly made to oscillate between the conflict in the minds of individual characters participating in the romantic action, and the vast panorama of suffering at both the social and individual levels caused by the Marhatta misrule. This community suffering is sharply individualized through the tragic fate of Das Khadanga, a moving dramatization of the plight of the common man. It may also be seen that the conflict in the main plot is resolved through events flowing from the larger conflict.

The importance of *Bibasini* in the history of Oriya literature lies in its attempt to treat history as an active background, as one that influences the destiny of individual characters. Rama Shankar does not succeed in fully achieving this because of a shallow moral concern and the consequent failure at being objective. But a reading of *Bibasini* makes one aware of a larger epic struggle looming behind the incidents which dramatize the story of a few individuals. Rama Shankar is not merely incorporating a few details of the history of a small state as does Sarkar in his *Padmamali*. History is not confined here to a set of events. It is present in the form of a broad background of famine and the Marhatta misrule. But the links are rendered tenuous because of the author's scheme and because of his failure to properly assimilate the stark realities of life he is delineating.

### III

Written in the first decade of the 20th century *Lachhama* (1914) by Fakirmohan Senapati marks a turning point in the history of Oriya prose fiction. The writers who preceded Fakirmohan were primarily interested in telling an exciting tale of love and adventure ; though their novels betray a certain uneasiness while presenting a purely fictitious world which is at a remove from contemporary reality, they find it hard to contain their impulse to romance. The experience of contemporary reality keeps breaking through, but the past is always presented in a remote, hazy and romantic context. Such an image of the past clearly indicates the absence of a sense of history which enables one to view the past, present and future as

the present is the product of the past and the seed-bed of the future. The novelists who preceded Fakirmohan failed to properly project the relation between the past and the present and this may be the reason why the novels of both Rama Shankar and Sarkar stress the distance of the present from the past.

The structure of *Lachhama* is designed to unify two major strands : one relating to large, epic conflicts where mighty forces collide with each other, kingdoms rise and whole cultures perish ; and the other comprising a personal drama of love, honour, revenge and reunion. These two levels do not run parallel to each other as in *Bibasini*. The structural excellence of *Lachhama* is to be seen in their interaction and fusion. Of course, at the end the novel is quietly handed over to romance : the plot centred on love and revenge heads independently towards an artificial, melodramatic resolution. But before the popular, conventional strain takes over, Fakirmohan has already achieved an unprecedented artistic break-through in respect of the historical novel. In *Padmamali* and, to a large extent, in *Bibasini*, the history and the romantic tale had remained apart. But in *Lachhama*, the romantic tale of revenge and reunion is made to grow out of the larger process of the historical conflict itself. It is partly resolved within this very process without having to take recourse to the fantastic trappings of romance. The machinery of romance is brought in only at the end and the conclusion, therefore, clearly appears to be contrived and mechanical.

It is quite clear that unlike his predecessors, Fakirmohan is possessed of a high degree of historical consciousness—a consciousness of history as a process involving conflict, decay and revival. What is more important is the way this consciousness finds expression in the novel which is a work of art. The historical consciousness in *Lachhama* has two major components : the characters' experience and awareness of the historical process and the narrator's conception of time.

For most of the characters in the novel history is the immediate experience of war, devastation and oppression. But Fakirmohan succeeds in making history a part of an individual's tragic experience. Jugu Fatch Singh's mother in *Lachhama* loses her two sons in the war and goes crazy : in the daytime she quarrels with men and at night with bedbug. She suspects the heroine Lachhama to be a Marhatta soldier in disguise and raises an alarm which results

in the precipitate flight of the panic-stricken villagers into the neighbouring forest.<sup>5</sup> The creation of a character in her who crystallizes in herself the tragic experience of a whole community at a particularly painful moment in the history of Orissa is really an extraordinary imaginative feat.

The debate between the Marhatta emissary and the loyal priest in the eleventh chapter dramatizes the clash between two opposed interpretations of history: the secular and the religious. The Marhatta emissary sees the history of India in terms of the struggle of a Hindu nation against alien powers to assert its identity. But the loyal priest emphasizes the degeneration of both the Hindus and the Muslims and concentrates, instead, on the fact of the suffering of common people caused by oppression. He speaks of the inevitability of the decay of both these powers since they have violated the basic human principles through oppression and injustice. He prophesies the advent of British rule. It is important to recognize that one of the major triumphs of the novel consists in Fakirmohan's broadly secular, liberal, humanist vision of history.

But it will be too much to claim that Fakirmohan presented all reality historically as a process. In chapter seven the narrative voice distinguishes between two kinds of time and makes use of a revealing metaphor. Cosmic, timeless time is represented by a potter's wheel which remains where it is even while it moves. Human time or change is symbolized by the innumerable pots shaped by it and pots that are destroyed everyday. Human time for Fakirmohan is related to cosmic time which is the source of movement but which remains untouched by the processes of change. Thus, the recognition of a reality above that of the world bound by time and space, renders Fakirmohan's vision of history problematic. It is clear that he does not wholly subscribe to the historicist view of reality which gave the classical European historical novels their special character.

#### IV

*Nila Shaila* (1966) by Surendra Mohanty was written almost eighty years after Umesh Chandra Sarkar had written *Padmamali*. In this novel, Mohanty deals with a specific historical past. His purpose here is to dramatize the decay of Oriya society during the 18th

that Mohanty, too, has not been able to resolve the dichotomy of history and fiction. In his prefaces to the various editions he indicates the problems of a historical novelist. His intention, he asserts, is not to present the bare facts of history, but to present the "eternal flow of life"<sup>6</sup> underlying these facts. An examination of the organization of the novel would show that such a conception of the historical novel creates problems which Mohanty has not successfully resolved.

In *Nila Shaila* the emphasis of the author has been shifted from structure to atmosphere. In other words, the world of action in *Nila Shaila* is limited and Mohanty seeks to support the grand design of a historical novel with this limited world. The historical experience of decay in the Oriya society during the 18th century forms its essence. But this is soon made into an extension of the spiritual experience of alienation from God. An analysis of the structure makes it obvious.

Very little really 'happens' in the novel in spite of its considerable length. Much of the historical matter that could have furnished exciting action is kept in the background and is brought in as extended reminiscences and flashbacks. Most of the action has already taken place before the novel begins. Ramachandra Dev, the protagonist, has lost the war against Muslims because of the betrayal of Bakshi Benu Bhramarbar, a political upstart who aspires to the throne of Khurdha. Ramachandra Dev is taken prisoner and only in order to save the honour of Lord Jagannath from Muslim vandalism he marries Taki Khan's sister and embraces Islam. This infuriates his queen who returns with her grown-up son to her father's house and joins the conspiracy against the king. Bakshi Benu Bhramarbar engages in intrigues in order that he might supplant the king as the rightful supervisor of the temple of Lord Jagannath. Taki Khan, on his part, is not deceived by Ramachandra Dev's conversion and looks for an opportunity to plunder the wealth of the Jagannath temple. This is the situation against which the novel seeks to build its main action, that of protecting the image of Lord Jagannath from the hands of infidels—an action which occupies the novel after four-fifths of its space are already exhausted in depicting the many political intrigues and Ramachandra Dev's helplessness and alienation.

In consequence, the novel lacks historical motion and depends for its appeal mainly on a poetic atmosphere and style which do not grow out of the action itself and seem to have been superimposed.

a certain struggle of the Oriya society against internal decay and external enemies. The Jagannath temple is the centre of this conflict and Ramachandra Dev's attempts to keep the idols untainted has a distinct political implication. In fact, at one point in the novel, Ramachandra Dev feels guilty of having used Jagannath as a pawn on a political chess-board. For other characters it is a plain and simple game of power. But the novelist, who identifies with Ramachandra Dev, reveals an ambiguous attitude towards this conflict and tends to spiritualize it. The historical conflict gives way to the portrayal of the alienation of man oppressed by changes in a time-bound world from a timeless divine reality. Thus, instead of rendering a sense of the historical process, the author concentrates on depicting this alienation through the medium of such poetic devices as images and symbols. Fakirmohan in his *Lachhama*, it may be remembered, is aware of such a timeless world which transcends the historical, human world of change. But he is mainly preoccupied with the world of history, of changes taking place in a time-space framework. He never allows the timeless world to supersede the temporal.

The world of *Nila Shaila* is clearly divided into two spheres : the sphere of history which is projected through battles, intrigues and ambition, and the sphere of spiritual experience which is presented as timeless. Within the sphere of history itself we have both fact and fiction. The facts of history, as presented in the novel, are more or less accurate but here, too, Mohanty seems to have overstressed the necessity of historical accuracy. While presenting the bare facts of history he expresses a confidence which is unwarranted and assumes the tone and mannerism of an official historian. This aspect of the novel has not gone unnoticed by the contemporary historians of Orissa, and the author has been taken to task for it.<sup>7</sup> The fictional characters and situations in the novel are supposed to be symbols of a deeper experience of a period of decadence in the history of Orissa.

The sphere of spiritual experience involves the alienation of Ramachandra Dev and the people of Orissa from Lord Jagannath : by glossing over the political realities of this crisis Mohanty makes this separation appear to be a distressing spiritual experience. He says in so many words that this sphere is above history and that it embodies a timeless, spaceless experience. The sphere of history, therefore, is reduced to a mere platform on which a timeless drama



## V

Thus, it may be seen that, for all their dissimilarities in creative vision and style, the Oriya historical novels reveal an identical pattern in respect of the fact-fiction integration. No doubt, as one passes from *Padmamali* to the later Oriya historical novels, one observes the emphasis of the Oriya novelist undergoing certain changes ; but the problem of reconciling the demands of history and imagination remains largely unresolved. On certain crucial issues that are specific to the genre of historical novel, therefore, the history of the Oriya novel does not exhibit much progress. Rather, it displays a certain circularity of movement with Fakirmohan occupying the most significant mid-point in the cycle.

As has been seen, the writer's main concern in *Padmamali* is to properly organize a set of historically true events into the purely fictive world of romance. The opposition here is primarily between the historical fact and artistic illusion. This problem takes on a new dimension in *Bibasini*. Here the novelist is faced with the problem of reconciling truth with morality, not so much with that of synthesizing reality and imagination. The author is overtly didactic and wants historical events to illustrate a moral. But an honest concern with historical facts as he knows them, he realizes, will certainly not help project a morally satisfying order. The looseness of its structure may partly be explained by the author's failure to reconcile the demands of history and poetic justice.

Fakirmohan's *Lachhama* marks a point of departure by making a creative interpenetration between history and fiction possible. Like *Padmamali* and *Bibasini*, it too is designed as a historical romance, but its seriousness of purpose renders it markedly different. It conceives of the facts of history as aspects of a process. In *Lachhama* history is broadly projected as a process of growth and decline of a whole culture. Further, it sees the process as a continuous one. This, however, is not the same as the concept of history one finds embodied in the classical Western historical novels. It is clear that there is a fundamental difference between Fakirmohan and the Western historical novelists in their conception of time.

Sixty years later, Surendra Mohanty in his *Nila Shaila* is seen to be suggesting an intriguing relation between history and the novel.

of a romantic tale in *Padmamali*, Surendra Mohanty used history as merely a gripping background for dramatizing the protagonist's anguished search for political security and spiritual assurance. History as a process that gives the European classical historical novelists their theme and structure, does not appear in this novel. *Nila Shaila*, therefore, remains essentially enclosed by the same conventional mould that we have seen in Sarkar or Rama Shankar.

Such a circularity brings one to discuss the state of Oriya culture in course of the last century. It has already been shown that Oriya culture has not been able to develop a historical conception of life largely because its break with tradition has never been complete, a tradition which is rooted in certain perspectives that are cosmic and timeless in quality. In modern times, therefore, Oriya culture has tried to accommodate widely various—even conflicting—values. In the European context a radical rupture with a similar tradition was responsible for the growth of historical consciousness. In the Orissan context, and in the Indian context as a whole, this process of accommodation has hindered the evolution of a sense of history. History, therefore, has never replaced 'fate' as it did in the European context in the 19th century.

The pattern in the evolution of the historical novel in Oriya seems to hold good in respect of other Indian literatures as well. Interest in the past continues to be inspired by nationalism and not by a need to explore the nature of reality and change. This explains the self-consciousness at the heart of the historical novels written in Oriya and the tendency to ground fiction on historical facts.

In conclusion, it may be observed that the historical novel has not exhausted its possibilities in the Indian context, as it appears to have done in Europe where the concept of 'reality' itself, has undergone fundamental changes and has become problematic. Presumably, the primary impulse to a romantic realistic exploration of the past may not be available in Europe today as intensely as it is still to be encountered in the Indian society. Therefore, the form continues to challenge creative writers of the future to explore reality, both past and present, more acutely and give it a more profound artistic treatment.

**NOTES**

- 1 This paper is a broad summary of a just-completed, extended monograph on the Oriya historical novels.
- 2 See T.W. Clark, ed., *The Novel in India* (London, 1970), p. 15.
- 3 It is a century now of the Oriya novel and time such assessments were made.
- 4 1st edition.
- 5 Ch. 16.
- 6 Preface to the second edition (Cuttack, 1970).
- 7 See Paramananda Acharya, *Jhankar* (May, 1972), pp. 197-202.

## ESPERANTO LITERATURE, BILINGUAL AUTHORS AND TRANSLATION

Quite apart from the worldly reality of Esperanto as the language of a diasporic speech community and of its specific cosmopolitan culture, the Esperanto idea symbolizes something for cultured people at large, including of course people least informed about the factual aspect of it. One feels tempted to say, especially those people, as ignorance makes fantasy easier. As is also usual, though, knowledge also makes for worthwhile imagination, extending imagination's ability to interact positively, rather than just passionately, with the rest of personality—not least with knowledge itself. It sounds interesting to say, "The less you know about Esperanto as it is, the more you can grasp the essence of the idea, which alone is significant." But once you get caught in *The Interesting*, in this or any other shape, mental hedonism is going to get you, and before you know what's happening Heidegger will quite legitimately start calling you obscure names capable of smoking you out of the conceit you had built to live in. Disaster.

What is the other option ? To wade through the rubbish of dates and names besetting every empirical study ? If that's not an efficient way for you to use the time, we pick a different style. Maybe speculation is your forte. Such as, notes towards imagining the possibility of this, that and the other, as in Kant. So that's what we should do. Imagine that the Esperanto culture isn't really there, that you're going to just imagine that it exists. Husserl taught himself and several others a game of that kind ; it had two parts, (1) The Bracketing and (2) Putting Humpty Together Again. The whole game was called Phenomenology. Nietzsche called the game

invited to play that game, whatever you want to call it. What is going to be mentally built up from nothing is the whole idea of Esperanto literature, no less.

You start with nothing. A specific nothing, though, like the no-Pierre that Sartre talks about somewhere. He's waiting for Pierre in his favourite café, but no show, and gradually the absence of Pierre, as a materially-there nothingness, haunts the café as Sartre sees it. So also, the nothing that we start with is no-Esperanto. There are languages all right. Languages like Burmese, spoken only locally. Like Bangla, spoken all over the place, but, by and large, not imposed on other speech communities as a socially compulsory second language. Like English, spoken everywhere and imposed on non-speakers of it by a variety of means, ranging from outright thuggery to civilized, 'cultural', overpowering, to the point where many victims have internalized the assault and have lost or are losing their first languages, transferring their language loyalty, as the sociolinguists say, to English. Our nothing is an absence of Esperanto, but there are other languages, of course. The unplanned ones, where what sociolinguists call language planning has played no significant part in the development of the language; and the partly planned ones, like Hindi and Bahasa Indonesia, affected by conscious intervention on a large scale. Anticipating Esperanto usage, let us call both unplanned and partly planned languages ethnic languages. This doesn't have to mean that language and race are correlated; they aren't; but even multi-ethnic languages like French have roots, after all, in the ethnic life of one or many communities. That is the point. We may use 'ethnic' as an antonym of 'planned'.

Still trying to get our bearings in this nothingland, we look again at the idea that there are, of course, ethnic languages. What's so 'of course' about that? Well, not all ethnic groups have developed philosophy or physics or mathematics, but language goes without saying. This is its of-course-ness. Many contemporary linguists and biologists believe that the human genotype not only destines everybody to learn a language, but even forearms the infant brain. So the human child knows most of the important things about all human languages (they are the same everywhere, being dictated by the genotype of the species) and more or less knows *how* to cope with the speech it hears, *how* to handle the material efficiently and

can pick up a broadcast because it internally 'knows' what a radio broadcast is like in principle.

An interesting fact, stressed in recent times by the Estonian literary scholar Jurij Lotman, is that all known human communities have not just language but literature as well, be it written or oral. Thus literature also, perhaps for likewise genotypic reasons, belongs to the definition of human beings. Literature's universality across cultures and unique affiliation to the human species need to be taken seriously. A discipline which does so, and builds a conceptual workspace enabling traditional insights to come into their own in a new but astonishingly natural interconnectedness that catalyzes wide-ranging yet rigorous inquiry, with results that dovetail and overlap with findings in sister disciplines—such a discipline has not yet, one wonders why, emerged. In its absence, an absence which is anything but imaginary, literary scholarship remains irredeemably anecdotal and provincial, punctuated by gestures in the direction of cross-cultural generalization, scientism, historicism, utopian declarations about the True Foundation of All Literature, and 'other forms of boredom advertised as poetry'.

In the absence of a science of literature proper, linguists have a field day. Many of them have given a precise and testable, though half-true at best, form to the traditional thought that a literature keeps its language alive and warm. I won't go into the details here. The point itself, apart from the greater precision which I have alluded to, is banal—unless, that is, we can make it yield an interesting consequence. We can, as it happens.

If a literature keeps its language alive in the strong sense, it follows that a language cannot live unless its literature does. Read that Unless as Until and you get a new statement, one which specifies in part what must happen for there to be an Esperanto: any new language will have to engender a literature if it wants to thrive.

Armed with this implicational relation between the concept of Esperanto and that of its literature, we are ready, I hope, to imagine both of these things into existence.

But that doesn't work. We've forgotten the society. All right, let there be an Esperanto speech community which produces and consumes its literature. This brings us closer to reality. To narrow the gap even further we'd have to worry about the details of how

how the community produces and reproduces itself, how it acquires and modifies a core ideology, how it interacts with the world at large. Frankly, I don't think our thought-experiment can adequately conjure up just the right (real) answers to those questions. Let us set them aside and move on.

We have postulated a speech community with a literature. One of the jobs of this literature is, naturally, to demarcate and describe the community for the internal public. It would be oversimple to postulate just a specific body of writing which has this function. Although there must be such a corpus, the function must also inform the rest of the literature.

Since the personality traits, institutions, values and other things which constitute the community can't be discussed properly without using a lot of Esperanto expressions, we can't get at that aspect if the language of our imagining game is English. Let's just take that internal base for granted, also assuming that the literature touches base in various ways all the time, this being the normal relation of a literature to its community. On these assumptions, we ask what role the Esperanto author's ethnic mother tongue plays in or outside his or her Esperanto writing.

This is the sort of question for which imagining an answer by fiat isn't going to feel worthwhile. We want to think about it and grasp the logic of the situation.

By assumption, Esperanto is an international language, a supplement to the set of ethnic languages. It is a planned language whose birth pangs are on record. Although it is a first language for quite a few of its speakers, it is nobody's only first language, and most people learn it consciously, though not necessarily after puberty (that's when the relevant learning faculty of the brain wilts). Thus, an Esperanto author is going to have at least one ethnic first language interfering—if that's the word—with his or her Esperanto. Notice that it would be a mistake to regard this ethnic language as the author's literary reference world, unless you're discussing work done in the early eighteen nineties when Esperanto literature had little to guide it. The author is responsible to the Esperanto speech community and its specific literary tradition. Ethnic literatures can, of course, influence this tradition, but without being able to determine its course.

two, let us consider the symbolic value of Esperanto. This language is the closest anybody has come to putting together a medium for equal communication across ethnic group boundaries, with no loss of dignity through the imposition of one group's language on other groups. It follows that the literature of such an intermedium must include a variety of translations from the ethnic literatures. We can expect a difficult and protracted debate between the translationist and the originalist view about what sort of headway Esperanto literature should concentrate on making—more and better translations, or advances in original creative writing. Such a debate, along with other factors, should heighten the average author's awareness about the very category of Translation in relation to the essence of literature. One is led to ask whether all writing involves an element of translation ; a serious pursuit of this line of inquiry leads at least to Jacques Derrida's concept of *différance* spelt with an *a*. For a text, to be is to be a translation of, and to be translated into. Meaning is translation. Even a first formulation translates from the language of experience. And this process, to invite Freud to this picnic of ideas, involves condensation, displacement and overdetermination, as in dreams.

Even the Esperanto author who doesn't travel quite so far along these lines will have to live—our second approximation says—with a special presence of Translation which many people who write in just one ethnic language don't feel.

This presence can be experienced as a shadow. Uriel Weinreich's study of *Languages in Contact* (Linguistic Circle of New York, 1953), pp. 119-121, cites many scholars' worries about deleterious effects of bilingualism, but his sympathies lie with one Weiss, who "scoffs at such speculations, arguing that the 'psychological wholeness of the bilingual person suffers not at the clash of linguistically fixed concept systems, but from the insecurity of his external life conditions.' This line of thought is an attempt to reintroduce scholarly sanity into political speculation on a psychological problem." Weinreich goes on to mention "Spoerl's study" (I am systematically editing out his references) which "distinguishes itself from all the preceding speculation by its sound experimental basis. To explore 'the various emotional factors which result, at the college level, from the experience of having been brought up through childhood in a bilingual environ-



various symptoms of maladjustment. She arrived at the conclusion that it is the higher frequency and intensity of family conflicts in bilingual homes—not the child's 'mental conflict' resulting from speaking two languages—which produces maladjustment. Thus bilingualism and its effects function as a culture-complex pattern and not as a direct handicap against the individual."

Interested, we read on: "Fishman tested a group of children for a correlation between the degree of their bilinguality and their friendship and leisure habits, without finding any significant correlation.

"Of course, a great deal may depend on the relations between the two language communities. Bossard mentioned the special handicap of bilingualism when the second language is one of a hostile nation. 'A war will often afflict a bilingual person particularly severely because it may be to him almost a civil war.' " Weinreich goes on, but we leave him here. Civil war is the key to the malaise which concerns us.

To the extent that an ethnic group goes chauvinistic, indulging in narcissism or in hostility towards other groups' rights, this group is, at least latently, in a state of war; it becomes an enemy of human co-operation in general and in some cases also of certain outside groups in particular. In our nationalistic world, the phenomenon just described is chronic and ubiquitous. And we have seen that such a state of war constitutes civil war as far as an Esperanto-speaking person is concerned. If you belong to your country and your world, and if your country, like many countries, finds it natural to take an anti-world stance, where does your mind go?

We see, then, that an Esperanto author's situation is significantly worse than that of just any bilingual who writes. The latter is under stress only when the language loyalties happen to conflict. For the former, such conflict is a quasi-permanent condition.

If that's all there is to it, it becomes difficult to imagine flesh and blood people choosing such a fate. To establish the possibility of an Esperanto author, we must be able to point to rewards on the plane of what Whitehead called 'satisfaction that goes beyond joy and sorrow'.

To see such rewards, all we need to do is look at the other face of Translation, the benign one. The face which has to do with access and perspective. Just as having two eyes makes for depth in

what lies behind the welter, and, more directly, puts you in touch with realities that each language expresses better than the other. And the whole process takes on a novel twist because of the meeting-ground character of Esperanto.

What I mean is, writers who want to add something to the basic store of the language—and I don't just mean words—try out their wares, whether taken from their own ethnic languages or a personal product. On some matters, slightly different proposals come in (via particular writings which use the proposals); competition follows; one of the contending forms eventually wins. Quite a bit of this process is closely watched by theoreticians, but they can't run the show, because too many users of the languages are non-intellectuals, and because the laws which govern language change are mostly unknown. Why, for instance, does Esperanto resist words containing an *n* followed by a *sh* or a *zh* sound, or basic adjectives ending in *ea*? Nobody knows, but evidently there has been no conscious intervention stopping such words. In any event, let us summarize: individuals from divergent backgrounds delicately sound each other out to arrive (unconsciously) at linguistic solutions which suit all concerned.

To relate this to our main line of discussion, we only need to notice that this means that access to Esperanto gives you indirect access to a whole lot of other languages which have been making more or less perceptible contributions to its linguistic and literary make-up. Thus, the two-eyed vision effect gets a special boost in the case where one of the eyes is Esperanto.

With such rewards, our hypothetical author can perhaps be forgiven for choosing to write in Esperanto in spite of the high coefficient of anguish that may be involved. (For readers who find the word 'anguish' hyperbolic here, I should perhaps hold up the game and mention the real-life fact that there were massive state actions against Esperantists under Hitler and Stalin. There are many places where it can happen again.) The presence of Translation in such an author's life is an enriching one, in the final reckoning.

We now point our imagination at the figure of the bilingual author who writes both in Esperanto and in an ethnic language. This move brings new problems to the fore. Presumably we should reserve the term 'bilingual author' for authors of this kind. To use

(but writes, perhaps, in just one of them) would be to waste a good term, compelling people to invent some outlandish expression to make their meaning perfectly clear.

What makes the case of a bilingual author special is that writing in your ethnic language means participating in your ethnic social formation more fully, perhaps to the extent of helping shape its ideology (or some region thereof) and identifying with its main currents. This leads to potentially acute tension between the ideology of your ethnic formation and the points of view prevailing in the Esperanto world. One way or another, you have to make your peace with both worlds, and the strain can be great. It pays to be good at erecting defence mechanisms to shield yourself.

Another thing that makes such an author special is that you can afford to switch in and out of your worlds when you get tired of *these* freedoms and long for *those*. Suppose your ethnic society is oppressive in some respects and makes it difficult for you to write what you need to. Well, you write those things in Esperanto. Suppose the yen seizes you to write a book full of allusions to a highly specific piece of your ethnic community's recent past, and you want to write something which isn't a period piece but relies on (and perhaps plays with) your readers' knowledge of the relevant cultural material. That you must write in your ethnic language.

It's not just the social constraints and familiarities that count. There is also the little matter of the linguistic medium itself. Here it all depends on exactly what your ethnic language is. In a language like Bangla or Maithili you are relatively free to make up new words using accepted principles and elements; in French and English this is far less commonly possible. (By 'possible' I don't mean physically possible, of course, I mean linguistically possible. If, when you make something up, it sounds odd or off, that means the language isn't letting you do it.) In this respect Esperanto has been designed to out-Bangla Bangla, and it's probably going to retain this malleableness for a long time to come. I realize that by saying all this in a factual tone of voice I'm breaking the rules of our Husserl-Nietzsche imagination game, but surely you didn't expect me to take *that* expository gimmick altogether seriously; you'd have been bored to tears if I really had.

The things I've been saying take on a broader significance if you

truth-telling enterprise of some kind, as Sankha Ghosh, for example, does. (See his introduction to his *Sreshetho Kobita* volume.) If you are a bilingual author with Esperanto as one of your literary languages, the chances are that you can come relatively close to the ideal of telling your truth in its irreducible plurality. That is the advantage. If it seems otherwise, if, for instance, you find that by trying to write in two languages you've bitten off more than you can chew, then perhaps the kind of truth that is yours to tell calls for a restrained repertoire in one particular language; in that case you haven't been 'called' to be a bilingual author.

To attain even more general understanding of the issues, it will be better to abandon our concrete thoughts about individuals who write in Esperanto. Let us ask instead what Esperanto literature as a phenomenon signifies or symbolizes.

I think it stands for the possibility of redefining, reconstituting, literature and with it culture as a whole, in ways that we can only now begin to ask articulate questions about. Consider the view that a literature keeps a language alive. It has always been an open question to what extent, if any, this might be true of language varieties in culture contact situations (pidgins and creoles), in the shadow of a powerful literary language (patois), and in the role of a non-native link language (e.g. broken English; the sociolinguistic technical term, LWC for Languages of Wider Communication, strikes me as rather bombastic). Thus, there is, arguably, no need to deny the genuineness qua literature of certain Indian productions in English; but one may ask in what way such production is essential to maintaining the role of English as a link language in India. The analogous question about Esperanto would pertain not to its present status, that of a proposed world link which has been accepted by a community of a few million people and used for about a century, but to its *proposed* status, that of a taken-for-granted lingua franca known by everybody with international interests of any sort. That, after all, is the idea of Esperanto which, as I said at the outset, is relevant also for people outside the community of its speakers. The question is: given such international currency, would Esperanto still need a literature as much as it does now?

The answer seems to be yes, regardless of one's views about whether a literature in some sense keeps its language going. Perhaps

more important in our period, one which has to do with making sense of the world. Talking about mythology, Dan Sperber makes intriguing suggestions to approximately this effect in his *Rethinking Symbolism*. It is possible for the literature of a language to be necessary without the language needing the literature for survival. Speakers have non-linguistic mental needs too.

This was a pedestrian point. But watch what follows from it. Present-day Esperanto literature, then, doesn't just serve its language, but has undertaken, on a small scale, that project of making sense of our shared cosmopolis, writing a world literature which lives on its own plane without reflecting on the worth of ethnic literatures on their plane. You can see this project at work perhaps more clearly than usual in the minds of bilingual Esperanto authors. And at every step of this labour, vital questions arise (and receive partial answers or elaboration) about the exchangeability (the extrinsic value ?) and the intrinsic worth of all sorts of linguistic valuables. This dimension of the wealth of nations has yet to find its Adam Smith, not to speak of its Marx.

#### COLOPHON

Although no one is to be blamed for what I do with other people's ideas, I must confess that I have taken certain ideas about the situation of the bilingual Esperanto writer from a letter of Marjorie Boulton's (she *is* one), the thought that literary criticism is not yet a real discipline from some loud thinking by Amiya Dev (to whom this paper is also indebted in other ways) and the view of the Esperanto world as diasporic from Giorgio Silfer's *Enkonduko al la Literatura Kritiko*, of which I wrote an unnecessarily bantering review last year.

THE GAELS IN SEARCH OF AN EPIC  
AN INTRODUCTION TO EARLY GAELIC LITERATURE

Some three thousand years ago when the Celts moved from the plain of Lombardy to wander in a north-westerly direction across Europe they left traces of their passing and their settling in the bronze masks, the stone pillars, the gold ornaments, the standing stones, the passage graves and the stone forts that archaeologists have brought to light during the past hundred years, all along their route through Germany, France, Britain and the Isle of Man to the furthest western limit of their odyssey in Ireland. Hallstatt, La Tene, Stonehenge, Emain Macha are milestones in space and time through the Rhineland, Gaul and Britain, from the Early Iron Age to the Bronze Age. The branch of this great Celtic family that settled in Ireland was the Goidels, a name eventually modified to Gaels whose language is Gaelic. These were the men of paradox who prompted Chesterton's lines :

The great Gaels of Ireland  
Were the men whom God made mad,  
For all their wars were merry,  
And all their songs were sad.

To the early European writers in Greek and Latin they did indeed seem mad in their impetuosity and fearlessness in war, their arrogance in victory, desperation in defeat, delight in ornament, feasting and recitation of poetry. Aristotle in the *Nichomachean Ethics* (iii, 7, 7) writes : "We have no word for the man who is excessively fearless ; perhaps one may call such a man mad ... who fears nothing, neither earthquakes nor waves, as they say of the Celts." And Cato the Elder declares of the Cisalpine Celts : "*duas res industriosissime persequitur, rem militarem at argute loqui.*" In contemporary

idiom the passions of the Celts may be termed 'dare-devilry and eloquence'.

There may well be a link between this esteem for the spoken word, the heard word, and the fact that the Celts left no written records, that the Gaels were the last race in Europe to develop the art of writing. It was only with the coming of Christianity to Ireland in the fifth century and the adaptation of Roman script to the sounds of the Gaelic tongue that a long oral tradition was captured in writing. There did exist an earlier linear script, Ogham, but it seems to be associated with magic cults or maintaining records rather than with preserving creative writing. For the Gaels have a vast store of legends in prose and verse purporting to date back a full millenium B.C. They speak of gods and goddesses, heroes and heroines, kings and queens who enjoy innumerable metamorphoses from human to divine states and vice versa. There are animals—bulls, bears, horses, wild boar and deer—endowed with 'human understanding' and powers magical or divine. Birds figure too in these tales, ravens and swans linked with silver chains—"divine beings metamorphosed"—and in the Happy Otherworld wondrous birds that lull men to sleep with their sweet singing. No wonder then that the Celtic Revival at the end of the last century provided such wealth for the poets and patriots of the Irish Freedom Movement, songs and symbols and visions !

When the ancient tales were first committed to writing in the sixth or seventh century the task was performed by clerics in the quiet of the monasteries that sprang up all over the island from the time of St Patrick. It is remarkable that in the first flush of their conversion to Christianity these men could still preserve with a considerable degree of objectivity the strange tales of their country's pre-Christian past. That some of the legends were modified by the impact of the new Biblical learning is evident from the fact that there is no Gaelic creation myth. Adam is the father of the Irish too ! Yet the majority of the tales in the two great cycles of myth—the Fenian and the Ulster cycles—are vigorously and unashamedly pagan.

The stories of the Fenian cycle centre round a giant figure named Finn and his warrior band the Fianna. The chief heroes of this group include Finn's son, Oisín, who is said to have returned several

Gaelic Otherworld) to be baptised by St Patrick. The monastic clerk obviously wished to ensure for Oisín a place in the Christian heaven. Also prominent are Oisín's son, Oscar, Caoilte Mac Ronain and Diarmuid, the prototype of Tristan. These men are heroes of the outdoor: "the life of wild nature is their choice". Indeed Finn is reputed to have come by the gift of divine wisdom in a most 'natural' way. As a young man he served an apprenticeship to a certain poet who had lived seven years by the banks of the river Boyne waiting for the salmon of Linn Feic, the salmon of knowledge. His patient waiting seemed rewarded when he caught the fish and asked young Finn to cook it, warning him not to taste it. In the course of the cooking he burned his thumb and instinctively stuck it in his mouth and got the flavour of the salmon. In dismay he went to his poet-mentor who recognized that the gift of divine knowledge was not for him but for his young disciple. Thereafter, whenever Finn was perplexed or in doubt he had but to put his thumb in his mouth and revelation came. He learned three means of divination which rendered a poet a sacred person—*teium laeda, imbas foromdae, dichetal di chennaibh*.

The Fenian tales are built into a frame-story like *The Decameron* or *The Arabian Nights*. Caoilte is represented as returning from the Otherworld many centuries after the passing of the Fianna. He travels the length and breadth of the land, meeting kings, warriors, even the ancient gods—for chronology is a small matter to the Gaelic *seanachaidhe* (story-teller). He tells tales of the heroic feats of Finn and the Fianna to his various hosts. He is, in very truth, the great bard or *dinnseanchas*. There is epic material here in abundance, but alas, no Homer nor Virgil to shape it into a great art form.

The Ulster Cycle gives us the nearest approach to a poem of epic dimensions that the Celts can boast of. The *Tain Bo Cualgne* (The Cattle Raid of Cooley) is the great central story around which cluster several lesser but entertaining tales, like filings clinging to a powerful magnet. The story tells how Medbh, Queen of Connacht, demanded and then captured a brown bull, the only one of its kind in Ireland, from the Cantred of Cualgne in the province of Ulster. War ensued between the 'men of Ireland' (Medbh's army) and the men of Ulster. At the time the Ulaidh (Ulstermen) were stricken by a strange mulady which befell them in times of danger—the consequence of a



already referred to. Cu Chulainn ('the hound of Culann'—and that is yet another story) is a youthful warrior exempt from the curse and he takes on the entire army single-handed until the men of Ulster recover and join him. The greater part of the narrative concerns Cu Chulainn's extraordinary exploits. In Medbh's camp are Fergus, the foster-father of Cu Chulainn, exiled from Ulster because he denounced King Connchobair's treachery (theme of another tale) and Fer Diad, Cu Chulainn's foster-brother. The last fierce single combat in a long series of such encounters is between the foster-brothers. Cu Chulainn slays Fer Diad after a long and equal struggle, only when he uses the *gae bolga*, a magic weapon given him by Scathach, the woman-warrior under whom he had graduated in the arts of war. The Ulster warrior himself was wounded and exhausted and lamented the death of his friend in poignant lines :

Alas for the golden brooch, O Fer Diad of the hosts !  
 O strong and valiant smiter, victorious was your arm.  
 Your thick yellow hair was curly—a fair jewel.  
 Your girdle, supple and ornamented, was around you until your death.  
 Our true comradeship was a delight for the eye of a nobleman.  
 Your shield with its golden rim, your chess-board worth much treasure.<sup>1</sup>

He was also Medbh's first husband, thus further complicating the relationships involved.

That you should fall by my hand I acknowledge was not just. Our fight was not gentle. Alas for the golden brooch.

And again :

All was play and sport compared with my meeting with Fer Diad on the ford. The same nature we had, the same weapons we used to wield. Scathach once gave two shields to me and to Fer Diad ...  
 O strong one of the tribes, you were more valiant than all others ...  
 There has not come into the centre of battle, nor has Banba ever nurtured, nor has there travelled over land or sea any king's son more famous than Fer Diad.

And the text adds : "Thus far the Tragic Death of Fer Diad".

Finally, after Medbh has sent the Brown Bull to her place at Cruachan, and the Ulstermen have defeated her army, she asks for a

ceasefire ! Fergus watches sadly as the remnants of the army toils homewards and remarks bitterly that men led by a woman could have no luck ! And what of the Brown Bull ? Medbh had sought him because though her herds equalled her husband's in number and value, she had no animal to rival a fine White Bull which had strayed from her herd into his and remained there. The Brown Bull of Cualgne was reportedly a beast of equal or superior quality. When this animal reached Cruachan he challenged the Whitehorned Bull and "they fought together until night fell on the men of Ireland." That night they traversed the whole of Ireland and men heard "their noise and their uproar". In the morning the Brown Bull was seen passing Cruachan with the White Bull on his horns. He galloped back to Cualgne scattering fragments of his dead foe as he went. When he reached the borders of Cualgne "he attacked the women and children and inflicted great slaughter on them. After that he turned his back to the hill and his heart broke like a nut in his breast."

Throughout the great prose poem there echoes the sound and fury of battle, the recounting of Cu Chulainn's fantastic exploits, there emerges the dominating character of Medbh, the surge of onslaught and defence moves across the entire plain of central Ireland. The decisive single combat between the warrior foster-brothers is re-enacted at another level in the final bull-fight and the tale ends with the breaking of a victor's heart like the sound of a nutshell cracked. It is a telling ironic comment, dramatic in its minor-keyed tone, on the pride, rivalry and carnage that has gone before. As the conclusion to a great war epic it may fall feebly on the ear, but as a comment on the folly of humankind and the futility of war it is poetry of a high order.

How much of the original poem has come down to us ? How much has been lost ? Even the scholars cannot answer these questions definitely. The seventh century manuscript no longer exists. When the Danes and the Norsemen invaded Ireland in the tenth and eleventh centuries the monasteries were often targets of hit-and-run raids. Valuable art treasures and countless manuscripts were vandalized, the monasteries sometimes reduced to ruins. After Brian Boramha defeated the Norsemen at Clontarf in 1014 it was possible to rebuild the monasteries and begin the task of retrieving and recreating the lost treasures of folklore. Fortunately, the

bardic tradition survived the introduction of writing in Ireland and the tales, that were recorded briefly in texts that seldom aspired to literary standards, continued to be recited in *oenachs* or folk gatherings where poets and bards entertained their listeners. The reconstruction of the manuscripts was not, then, an impossible task, but there was no co-ordination of the activities of the scattered monasteries and the skills of the scribes were often unequal. So different versions of the same stories resulted. *The Tain* as we have it today in translations by Thomas Kinsella and Cecile O'Rahilly does not exist in any single medieval manuscript. The oldest of these manuscripts—*Lebor na huidre* (familiarily known as the Book of the Dun Cow)—was compiled in the monastery of Clonmacnoise in the twelfth century. The text is flawed and mutilated as is the fourteenth century text in *The Yellow Book of Leccan*. Yet the two together give us the greater part of the story. *The Book of Leinster*, also twelfth century, contains a harmonized text and there is also a sixteenth century version in a more flowing style, in language of a later date than that used in the other three versions. There are lengthy passages in the earlier texts that linguistically date back to the eighth century, salvaged perhaps, from the mutilated remains of earlier manuscripts or, maybe, handed down orally in the family of some unknown bard, a tradition that is known to have continued into the eighteenth century.

One of the greatest disasters of British domination of Ireland, which began in the twelfth century and reached the peak of its malevolence in the eighteenth, was the destruction of the Gaelic language. It was systematically stamped out so that the mother tongue and the old stories survived in barren, inaccessible, poverty-stricken pockets of the country among people who had no access to formal education. The result was that no research into ancient traditions—legal, social, cultural, historical—was possible until the language was revived and restored. This movement began only in the final decades of the nineteenth century. So we find that the first research on Gaelic sagas is the work of German scholars like Windisch, Thurneysen and Strachan. Grammarians like Bopp and Zeuss made valuable contributions to the study of the language and its development down the centuries. French and Danish scholars also took a keen interest in the Celtic heritage and paved the way for the Irish researchers of the twentieth century : Professor T.F. O'Rahilly and his daughter,

Cecile, Professors Myles Dillon, David Greene, D.A. Binchy, James Carney and Prionnsais MacCana and the folklorist James Delargy, to mention a few.

Philologists and linguists have mined a rich vein in the ancient texts and identified a secondary group within the Indo-European family of languages, a group that includes Latin, Irish, Phrygian, Hittite and Tokharian. That gives the Gaelic language a venerable dimension, indeed. Language study aside, there are several characteristics and similarities that the *Tain* shares with epic literature of Greece and Rome. There are tempting parallels in Sanskrit epics already explored in some measure by Georges Dumézil and Myles Dillon and which invite further exploration. There is evidence to suggest that the scribe of the *Tain* was acquainted with Virgil. The screaming woman/witch called Allechtu surely suggests kinship with Allecto in the *Aeneid*. The boyhood feats of Cu Chulainn recall the exploits described in *Aeneid* II & III. Catalogues of armies and weapons ; instances of women who side-track warriors or betray them ; the Glais Cruind river rising against Medbh's army ; constant epithets like "Eochaid Salbuide" (Eochaid of the yellow heel), "Cormac Conlongas" (Cormac, Leader of the Exiles) and "Bricriu Nemthenga" (Bricriu of the poisonous tongue) : all these are characteristics common to the epic tradition of Greece, Rome, India and the Scandinavian lands. They may lead the researcher back to a common source in some far distant Indo-European past. Or there may be something in James Carney's much contested conclusion that the *Tain* is not primary but secondary epic, the work of a monastic poet in the eighth century enthralled with the new learning Latin had brought within his reach. Carney sees him setting out deliberately to emulate Virgil creating a new epic against the backdrop of ancient Gaelic folklore.

The older scholars see in Medbh, Cu Chulainn, Fergus, Fer Diad and other heroes ancient Celtic gods and goddesses presented in near human garb. Hence their impossible exploits, their sexual extravagances. Georges Dumézil sees Medbh as the personification of royal force and no high king can ascend the throne at Tara save as her consort ; hence her several marriages. He compares her intriguingly with Mūdhavi in the *Mahābhārata*. But Frank O'Connor sees the *Tain* notables as mere humans, interprets the tale as one of cyni-

Medbh a fitting place in John Knox's *Monstrous Regiment of Women*.

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NOTES

Some Anglo-Irish equivalents of Gaelic words are :

Bricriu Nemthenga : Brik-ruc nevtonga

Caoilte : Keel-te

Connchobair : Connor

Dinnseanchas : Deen-shan-khas

Fer Diad : Ferdia

Lebor na huidre : Le-war na heere

Medb(h) : Maeve

Oenach : ē-nak

Seanachaidhe : Shan-a-khee

- 1 All quotations are from Cecile O'Rahilly, ed., *Tain Bo Cualgne* (Dublin, 1967).

## রবীন্দ্রনাথ এবং ভারতীয় সাহিত্যের ধারা

তীক্ষ্ণবুদ্ধি এবং স্মরসিক এক জার্মান যুবক একবার আমাকে অদ্ভুত একটা কথা বলে চমকে দিয়েছিলেন। বলেছিলেন যে আমাদের আঞ্চলিক সাহিত্য খুবই হয়তো বৈচিত্র্যময়, কিন্তু আমাদের কোনো অথও সর্বভারতীয় সাহিত্যের অস্তিত্ব নেই যা আধুনিক। ইচ্ছে থাকলেও এই অভিযোগের আমি কোনো লাগশেষ জবাব দিতে পারিনি। দেওয়া বোধ করি কঠিন। ভারতবর্ষ যখন আছে তখন ভারতীয় সাহিত্যও আছে, এটা কোনো সন্দেহ নয়। ইঙ্গ-ভারতীয়েরা এক সময় বড়াই করতেন যে একমাত্র তাঁরাই হচ্ছেন সকল আঞ্চলিকতার উর্ধ্বে স্বার্থ আধুনিক ভারতীয় লেখক যেহেতু তাঁরা যে-ভাষায় লেখেন এবং যে-মানসিক পরিমণ্ডল থেকে সেই সব গল্পগুচ্ছ লেখার উৎপত্তি হয় তা তাবৎ শিক্ষিত ভারতবর্ষীয়ের, এমনকি ভিন্নদেশীয়ের পক্ষেও নির্বিঘ্নে বোধগম্য। অতিবৈষ্ণবের পক্ষেও হেন বাচালতায় কান দেবার মতো দৈর্ঘ্য রাখা কঠিন। কিন্তু প্রশ্নটা থেকেই যায় : কাকে বলে ভারতীয় সাহিত্য, কী তার চরিত্র, কী তার ধারা, এবং সেই নিখিল ভারতীয় সাহিত্যের কোনো বয়স্কপাঠ্য ইতিহাস আছে কিনা।

বিশাল এই উপমহাদেশে বহু শতাব্দী ধরে সমৃদ্ধ হয়ে উঠছে এমন সাহিত্য একটি-দুটি নয়, অনেক। যে-সব ভাষায় তা রচিত হয়েছে তারা সব ক্ষেত্রে এক পরিবারভুক্ত ভাগ্য নয়। রচনার অনুপুঙ্খও নয় এক শ্রেণীর, কেননা আহারে-বিহারে, আচারে-আচরণে, সামাজিক রীতি কিংবা ধর্মীয় অনুষ্ঠানে, এমনকি আঞ্চলিক ইতিহাসের বিশিষ্টতায় ইউরোপীয় জাতিসমূহের তুলনায় আমাদের প্রভেদ হয়তো কম নয় বরং বেশি প্রকট। এত প্রভেদের মধ্যেও কোথায় সেই আন্তরিক যোগসূত্র যা আমাদের দারণ করে আছে? সাম্প্রতিক কালে 'বিচ্ছেদপন্থী'দের কুচকাওয়াজের প্রতিপত্তি থেকেও মনে কি এ-আশঙ্কা কখনো ছায়া ফেলে না যে ভারতবর্ষ গতি্য এক থাকবে কিনা? আর তা যদি হয় তাহলে অভিন্ন কোনো ভারতীয় সাহিত্যের অস্তিত্বও কি

অথচ আমাদের মন বলে যে আপাতিক সমস্ত দুর্লক্ষণ সম্বন্ধে অন্য কোনো নিগূঢ় ঐক্যের সূত্রে আমরা আবদ্ধ আছি। আজীবন আমরা যারা রবীন্দ্রনাথে লালিত হয়েছি তাদের পক্ষে ভারতবর্ষীয় চিত্তলোকের অঞ্চল বিষয়ে প্রশ্ন তোলাই মর্ম-বিদারক। ভারতবর্ষে ইতিহাসের যে-ধারার তিনি ব্যাখ্যা করেছিলেন তাকে নিছক কবিকল্পনা বলে মানতে ইচ্ছে করে না। পাশ্চাত্য অর্থে যাকে ইতিহাস বলে তিনি অবশ্য তার কথা বলেননি। তিনি চেষ্টা করেছেন ভারতবর্ষীয় ইতিহাসের নানা বিক্ষিপ্ততার মধ্য থেকে একটি গ্রহণযোগ্য মূলসূত্র খুঁজে পাওয়ার। ভারতবর্ষ পরম শান্তিক, ভারতবর্ষ পরম শান্তির ভক্ত, কিংবা বিজাতীয়ের তুলনায় ভারতীয়গণ সাতিশয় আধ্যাত্মিক সঙ্গুণে ভূষিত এমন কোনো আরামদায়ক উপলক্ষি তিনি আমাদের কাব্যে-ইতিহাসে খুঁজে পাননি। ভারতবর্ষের ইতিহাস তাঁর খর দৃষ্টিতে দেখা দিয়েছিলো প্রচণ্ড জাতি-সংঘাতের, প্রবল সমাজ-বিপ্লবের এবং বিরোধেরই ইতিহাসরূপে—যে-সংঘাত, বিপ্লব, বিরোধের মধ্য থেকে বৃহৎ একটি ঐক্যের মধ্যে সংগত হওয়ার দৃষ্টান্ত অন্তর্হীনভাবে পুনরাবৃত্ত হয়েছে। বর্ণের এবং আদর্শের বিরোধ কখনো-কখনো অবশ্য এতই গুরুতর আকার ধারণ করেছে যে সেই বিরুদ্ধতার আঘাতে এক-একবার সমাজের সেই আত্মরক্ষণীশক্তিই বলবান হয়ে উঠেছে যা উদারতার পরিপন্থী। এবং সেই দুর্দৈব থেকে, সংকীর্ণ আত্মরক্ষণী শক্তির প্রভাব থেকে ভারতবর্ষকে বারংবার যারা উদ্ধার করেছেন, রবীন্দ্রনাথ দেখিয়েছেন যে তাঁরা কেউ সাধু-মোহান্ত শ্রেণীর লোক নন, তাঁরা ছিলেন ক্ষত্রিয় বীর, তাঁরা রাজর্ষি জনক, তাঁরা মহর্ষি বিশ্বামিত্র, তাঁরা রাম এবং কৃষ্ণ :

একদা ব্রাহ্মণেরা যখন আর্যদের চিরাগত প্রাণ ও পূজাপদ্ধতিকে আগলাইয়া বসিয়াছিলেন, যখন সেই সমস্ত ক্রিয়াকাণ্ডকে ক্রমশই তাঁহারা কেবল ঙ্গটিল ও বিস্তারিত করিয়া তুলিতেছিলেন তখন ক্ষত্রিয়েরা সর্বপ্রকার প্রাকৃতিক ও মানুসিক বাধার সঙ্গে সংগ্রাম করিতে করিতে ভ্রমোন্মাদে অগ্রসর হইয়া চলিতেছিলেন। এইজন্তই তখন আর্যদের মধ্যে প্রধান মিলনের ক্ষেত্র ছিল ক্ষত্রিয়সমাজ। শত্রুর সহিত যুদ্ধে বাহারা এক হইয়া প্রাণ দেয় তাহাদের মতো এমন মিলন আর কাহারও হইতে পারে না। মৃত্যুর সম্মুখে বাহারা একত্র হয় তাহারা পরস্পরের অনৈক্যকে বড়ো করিয়া দেখিতে পারে না। অপর পক্ষে নৃশাস্তিনৃশাস্ত্যভাবের মত্ত দেবতা ও যজ্ঞকার্যের স্বাতন্ত্র্য রক্ষার ব্যবসায় ক্ষত্রিয়ের নহে, তাহারা মানবের বন্ধুদুর্গম জীবনক্ষেত্রে নব নব ঘাতপ্রতিঘাতের মধ্যে মানুষ, এই কারণে প্রণামূলক বাহানুষ্ঠানগত ভেদের বোধটা ক্ষত্রিয়ের মনে তেমন হৃদৃৎ হইয়া উঠিতে পারে না। অতএব আত্মরক্ষা ও উপনিবেশ বিস্তারের উপলক্ষে সমস্ত আর্যদের মধ্যকার ঐক্যসূত্রটি ছিল ক্ষত্রিয়দের ভাণ্ড। এইরূপে একদিন ক্ষত্রিয়েরাই সমস্ত অনৈক্যের অভ্যন্তরে একই যে সত্যপদার্থ চোরা অনুভব করিয়াছিলেন। ( "ভারতবর্ষে ইতিহাসের ধারা" )

এইসব বীর ক্ষত্রিয়ের মধ্যেই জনকবিতা একদা অমূল্য আশ্রয় লাভ করেছিলো। বৈক্য-

ধর্মও তাঁদেরই প্রবর্তিত ধর্ম। তীব্রভাবে ঘেঁষ করা তাঁদের স্বভাবসিদ্ধ ছিলো ব'লেই বিরুদ্ধকে তাঁরা অবজ্ঞা করেননি, বরং ক্রমে তার সঙ্গে সঙ্গতিসূত্রে আবদ্ধ হয়েছেন। রবীন্দ্রনাথের দৃষ্টিতে ভারত-ইতিহাসের এই ব্যাখ্যার দিকে বিশেষ ক'রে তাঁদের মনোযোগ আকর্ষণ করতে চাই যারা এই কবিকে মরমী সাধকের আসনে প্রতিষ্ঠিত দেখার জন্ত ব্যাকুল। ভারত-ইতিহাস থেকে রবীন্দ্রনাথ যে-চরমতত্ত্ব আবিষ্কার করেছেন, তাকে তিনি বলেন জ্ঞান কর্ণ ও ভক্তির সমন্বয়যোগ। এবং এই একই প্রবন্ধে আধুনিক কালের বৈজ্ঞানিক অধ্যবসায়কেও যজ্ঞরূপে গণ্য করতে তিনি বিধা করেননি। দেখেছিলেন সর্ববিধ ভিন্নতা এবং বিরোধিতাকে সৌহার্দ্যের মধ্য দিয়ে বীরোচিত ভাবে ঐক্যবদ্ধ করার নিরন্তর প্রয়াস।

মনে হ'তে পারে যে আলোচ্য বিষয় থেকে আমি তির্যকভাবে নিষ্কাশ্য হ'য়ে বহুদূরে চ'লে এসেছি। সে শুধু এইজন্য যে নানা বিরোধ, নানা বিরুদ্ধতার মধ্যে যৌগিক সংগতি সাধনের এবং ঐক্য প্রতিষ্ঠার চিন্তাকেই আমার মনে হয়েছে রবীন্দ্র-ভাবনারও প্রধান একটি মূলসূত্র। সামাজিক ইতিহাস বিষয়ে এটি সত্য হ'লে সাহিত্যের ইতিহাস বিষয়েও সত্য। কিন্তু তা কি ঘটেছে? আঞ্চলিক ভাষা-সাহিত্যের পাশাপাশি কোনো সামগ্রিক ভারতীয় সাহিত্য বিষয়ক ঐক্যচিন্তা কি কোথাও দেখা যায়? খণ্ড-খণ্ড সাহিত্যের ইতিহাস পাওয়া যায়, তাদের অন্তর্গত রচনাটির অল্পস্বল্প অম্লবাদও ক্রমে দেখা দিচ্ছে। কেউ-কেউ পরামর্শ দিচ্ছেন, এই সব নানা সাহিত্যের সমাহারের নামই তো ভারতীয় সাহিত্য, যার নির্ধারিত এক, কিন্তু প্রকাশের ভাষা ভিন্ন। হয়তো তাই, কিন্তু নির্ভরযোগ্য কোনো সামগ্রিক ইতিহাস গতদিন লেখা না হচ্ছে ততদিন এ-ধরনের অম্লমাননির্ভর সিদ্ধান্তে সাহায্য দেওয়া কঠিন। ইতিহাস রচনার পক্ষে প্রাথমিক প্রয়োজন যে-ধরনের উপাদান সংগ্রহ করা—সে-কাজটি এখন পর্যন্ত শুরু করা হয়েছে কিনা সন্দেহ। এ-কাজ কখনো একজন দু-জনের পরিশ্রমে সমাধা হওয়ার নয়। কাজটা যে কঠিন তা এ-থেকেই বোঝা যাবে যে প্রতীচ্যের জাতীয় সাহিত্যসমূহকে অঙ্গীকার ক'রে যে-ধরনের সামগ্রিক সাহিত্যের সমন্বিত রূপ কল্পনা করা হয়েছে তারও ইতিহাস লেখার কাজটি শুরু হয়েছে মাত্রই সাম্প্রতিক কালে, যদিও এ-বিষয়ের জল্পনাকল্পনা বহুকালের। এ-কাজের দায়িত্ব নিয়েছেন আঞ্চলিক তুলনামূলক সাহিত্যসংস্থা। নানা দিশদেশাগত পণ্ডিত-গবেষকরা যৌথ-ভাবে এই কার্যে উদ্যোগী হয়েছেন, এবং তাঁদের নিরলস পরিশ্রমের ফলে এতদিনে এই ইতিহাসের একটিমাত্র খণ্ড সংকলিত হ'য়ে ছাপা হয়েছে হার্ভার্ড বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ব্রাহ্মণ্য থেকে, যার সম্পাদনা করেছেন এক মার্কিনি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের অধ্যাপক শ্রী উলরিশ ডাইসটাইন। এখানে আয়োজিত বৎসরের অধ্যবসায়ী পরিশ্রম এই কার্যে ব্যয়িত হবে তা কেউ জানে



সামগ্রিক ভারতীয় সাহিত্যের স্বরূপ নির্ণয়ের জন্য আমাদের দেশেও অল্পবিস্তর আলোচনার সূত্রপাত হয়েছে বটে, কিন্তু আসল কাজ শুরু করার ক্ষেত্রে কোনো কার্যশূচী গ্রহণ করা হয়নি। একেবারেই হয়নি তা বলবো না। কেবল দেশের সাহিত্য অকাদেমির প্রশংসাযোগ্য একটি পরিকল্পনা এই সূত্রে উল্লেখযোগ্য। সংকলিত গ্রন্থের নাম দেওয়া হয়েছে ‘তুলনামূলক ভারতীয় সাহিত্য’। পশ্চিমবঙ্গের কতিপয় গবেষকও এই পরিকল্পনার সঙ্গে যুক্ত আছেন বলে জানি। কিন্তু প্রয়োজন-মতো উপাদানের অভাবে, যদ্ব্যবসায় অনুমান করতে পারি, শেষ পর্যন্ত এটি হ’লে দাঁড়াবে আঞ্চলিক সাহিত্য-ইতিহাসসমূহের একটি গাণিতিক যোগফল মাত্র। আঞ্চলিক ইতিহাসের সাম্প্রতিক নমুনা থেকে একথা নিশ্চয়ই বোঝা যায় যে রবীন্দ্রনাথ বাংলা সাহিত্যের সর্বসিদ্ধিদাতা কবি এবং মনীষী। বুদ্ধদেব বসু বলেছিলেন তিনি “যেন এক দৈব আবির্ভাব—অপর্যাপ্ত, চেষ্টাহীন, ভাস্বর, পৃথিবীর মহত্তম কবিদের অন্ততম।” বাঙালির পক্ষে নিশ্চয়ই তিনি একান্তভাবে অপরিহার্য, তাঁর শ্রেষ্ঠত্ব স্বতঃসিদ্ধ। কিন্তু অপর আঞ্চলিক সাহিত্যের উপরে তাঁর অভিঘাত কী ভাবে কার্যকরী হয়েছে তার বিবরণ দেবার মতো যথেষ্ট আমরা সত্যি জানি না। সেজন্য আমাদের অপেক্ষা করতে হবে বতদিন না পূর্ণাঙ্গ কোনো ভারতীয় সাহিত্যের ইতিহাস রচিত হচ্ছে। অন্ত সাহিত্যের সঙ্গে অসম্পৃক্তভাবে সাহিত্যঘটনাবলীর ধারাবাহিক সংকলন সেটি হবে না। তাতে থাকবে কার্ণাকারণের এমন ধরনের বিশ্লেষণ যা থেকে রবীন্দ্রনাথ ভিন্ন প্রসঙ্গে থাকে বলেছিলেন ‘ইতিহাসের ধারা’ সেইটে নির্ণয় করা সম্ভব হবে। সে-ধরনের ইতিহাস একমাত্র যে-পদ্ধতিতে রচনা করা সম্ভবপর বলে মনে হয় তা হচ্ছে তুলনামূলক সাহিত্যের পদ্ধতি।

‘সমুদ্রপথে’ লেখা এক প্রবন্ধে আধুনিক বাংলা সাহিত্যের চরিত্র বিষয়ে রবীন্দ্রনাথ যে-কথা বলেছিলেন, আমার অনুমান, সে-কথা অন্ত্যন্ত আধুনিক ভারতীয় সাহিত্য বিষয়েও প্রযোজ্য। সে-আলোচনার পূর্বে ‘আধুনিক’ কথাটার অর্থ বিষয়ে দু-একটা কথা বলা দরকার। কথাটা বাংলা সাহিত্যে এক নয়, একাধিক প্রসঙ্গে ব্যবহার করার রেওয়াজ আছে। ইংরেজি ভাষার মধ্য দিয়ে ইউরোপীয় সাহিত্যের অভিঘাত এসে পৌঁছানোর পর থেকে যে-সাহিত্য এদেশে রচিত হয়েছিলো, আমি এখানে তাকেই বলছি আমাদের আধুনিক সাহিত্য। লক্ষ্য করবেন, ‘আধুনিক সাহিত্য’ নামের গ্রন্থে রবীন্দ্রনাথ যে-সব বাঙালি লেখককে নিয়ে আলোচনা করেছেন তাঁরাও আধুনিক এই অর্থেই। কেউ তাঁরা রবীন্দ্রপূর্ববর্তী কল্লোল-পরিচয়-কবিতা গোষ্ঠীর লেখক নন। তাঁদের মধ্যে আছেন নক্ষিমনন্দ, বিহারীলাল, আছেন শিবনাথ শাস্ত্রী এবং দ্বিজেন্দ্রলাল রায়। এই আধুনিক বাংলা সাহিত্য আমাদের প্রাচীন সংস্কৃত এবং মধ্যযুগের বাংলা

ইউরোপীয় সাহিত্যের সঙ্গে আমাদের প্রাথমিক পরিচয়সম্ভার অভিঘাত। ‘সবুজ-পত্র’র প্রবন্ধে এই ঘটনা বিষয়ে রবীন্দ্রনাথ লিখেছিলেন—এ যেন সাত সমুদ্রের পার থেকে আসা চলতি কালের রাজপুত্রের সঙ্গে, তারই সোনার কাঠির স্পর্শে নিদ্রা থেকে জেগে-ওঠা আমাদের স্বদেশী সাহিত্যের রাজকন্ঠার মালাবদল। স্বদেশী যুগে আমাদের বিজ্ঞাতি-বিদ্বেষ যখন সবিশেষ তীব্র হ’য়ে উঠেছিলো ঠিক সেই সময়ে এ-হেন উক্তি করতে পারার মধ্যে যথেষ্ট সাহসের প্রয়োজন ছিলো। “সোনার কাঠি” নামের এই প্রবন্ধে রবীন্দ্রনাথ বলেছিলেন :

কবিকঙ্কণচণ্ডী-কান্দশরীর আমি নিম্মা করছি নে। সাহিত্যের শোভাবাজার মধ্যে চিরকালই তাদের একটা স্থান আছে ; কিন্তু যাত্রাপথের সমস্তটা জুড়ে তারাই যদি আড্ডা করে বসে, তা হলে সে পথটাই মাটি...। বন্ধিম আনলেন সপ্তসমুদ্র-পারের রাজপুত্রকে আমাদের সাহিত্য-রাজকন্ঠার পালঙ্কের শিয়রে। তিনি যেমনি ঠেকালেন সোনার কাঠি অমনি সেই বিজয়-বসন্ত লায়লা-মজনুর হাতের দাঁতে বাধানো পালঙ্কের উপর রাজকন্ঠা নড়ে উঠলেন। চলতিকালের সঙ্গে তার মালাবদল হয়ে গেল...

সংকীর্ণ জাতীয়তাবাদে অন্ধ না হ’লে এটা কোনো অপমান বা লজ্জার কথা নয়। কেননা এই পরিণয়ের ফলে যে-নবীন সাহিত্যের জন্ম সূচিত হ’লো তা অনুকরণের নয়, অনুসরণেরও নয়, তা স্বীকরণের। রবীন্দ্রনাথের ভাষায় :

কাঠি ছোঁয়ার প্রথম অবস্থায় ঘূমের ঘোরটা যখন সম্পূর্ণ কাটে না তখন আমরা নিজের শক্তি পুরোপুরি অনুভব করি নে, তখন অনুকরণটাই বড়ো হয়ে ওঠে ; কিন্তু ঘোর কেটে গেলেই আমরা নিজের জোরে চলতে পারি। সেই নিজের জোরে চলার একটা লক্ষণ এই যে, তখন আমরা পরের পথেও নিজের শক্তিতেই চলতে পারি। পথ নানা, অভিপ্রায়টি আমার, শক্তিটি আমার।

আচারস্বর্ষস্বতার মানি থেকে স্বেচ্ছায় ভ্রষ্ট হ’য়ে দৈবক্রমে কখনো-কখনো এই ভাবে এক-একটা সাহিত্যে নবযৌবনের সূচনা হয়। দৃষ্টান্ত : ইউরোপের রেনেসাঁ। সেই রকমের অপর দৃষ্টান্ত উনিশ শতকে আমাদের সাহিত্যের নবজাগরণ। সাগরপার থেকে আসা অভিঘাতের পাশাপাশি সক্রিয় ছিলো আমাদেরই প্রাচীন সাহিত্যকেও নতুন দৃষ্টি নিয়ে পুনরাবিষ্কারের ঘটনা। ক্রমে তার সঙ্গে মিলেছিলো মৌখিক এবং লোক-সাহিত্যের সঞ্জীবনী প্রভাব। এই অভিঘাত এবং প্রভাবকে অঙ্গীকার ক’রে নিয়ে চলতিকালের উপযোগী যে-সাহিত্যের উৎসার হয়েছিলো তারই সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ পরিণতি রবীন্দ্রনাথ। চলতিকালের মতোই সে-সাহিত্য সহজ এবং সরল নয়, অনিবার্য কারণেই জটিল। তার চির রবীন্দ্রনাথের রচনা থেকে মুছে ফেলা সম্ভব নয়। নয় ব’লেই আজ পঞ্চম পাঠকের কচিঙেদে এবং পরিলোনের তরঙেদে রবীন্দ্রনাথ একান্ত

নৈমিত্তিক গীতিকারের কিংবা মরমী সাধকের অনিকল কণ্ঠস্বরও শুনতে পান। এবং খুব সম্ভব আর কিছুই শুনতে পান না। রবীন্দ্রনাথের ক্ষাত্তবীৰ্য এখন পর্যন্ত উপেক্ষিত।

আত্মসংকোচন এবং আত্মপ্রসারণ—এই দ্বৈত শক্তির টানাপোড়নে ভারতবর্ষে যে-ভাবে ইতিহাসের একটি মঙ্গলময় পাতা তৈরি হ'য়ে উঠছে ব'লে ভেবেছিলেন রবীন্দ্রনাথ, তার মধ্যে সমগ্র মানবজাতির ভাগ্যকেও তিনি মেনাতে চেয়েছিলেন, এই সূত্রে সে-কথাও মনে করিয়ে দেওয়া দরকার। নয়তো তাঁর বিশ্বভারতীর প্রতিষ্ঠা হ'তো না। তাবৎ বিশ্ব সেখানে সমবেত হ'য়ে যুক্ত করে ভারতবর্ষের শ্রীমুখনিঃসৃত বাণী শুনবে, সে-চিন্তা আর যারই হোক রবীন্দ্রনাথের নয়। বিশ্বকে সর্বস্ব ত্যাগ ক'রে ভারতবর্ষের নীড়ে ব'সে আশ্রয় নেবার জন্ত তিনি ডাকেননি; ডেকেছিলেন ভারতবর্ষকেও, একটি বৃহৎ ঐক্যে মিলিত হওয়ার জন্ত। তাঁর সে-অভিপ্রায় কী পরিমাণে সার্থক হয়েছিলো তার বিচার করার সময় হয়েছে। অল্পরূপ অভিপ্রায় থেকেই তিনি বিশ্বসাহিত্যের কল্পনা করেছিলেন, এই শতাব্দীর গোড়ার দিকে। জাতীয় সাহিত্যের অবলুপ্তির কথা বলেননি; বলেছেন জাতীয় সাহিত্যসমূহের সম্মিলনে রচিত হ'য়ে ওঠা বিশাল এক সৌধের কথা :

সাহিত্যকে এইভাবে দেখিতে হইবে যে, বিশ্বমানব রাজমিস্ত্রি হইয়া এই মন্দিরটি গড়িয়া তুলিতেছেন; লেখকেরা নানা দেশ ও নানা কাল হইতে আসিয়া তাহার মজুরের কাজ করিতেছে। সমস্ত ইমারতের প্ল্যানটা কী তাহা আমাদের কারও সামনে নাই বটে, কিন্তু যেটুকু ভুল হয় সেটুকু বার বার ভাঙা পড়ে; প্রত্যেক মজুরকে তাহার নিজের স্বাভাবিক ক্ষমতা পাটাইয়া, নিজের রচনাটুকুকে সমগ্রের সঙ্গে খাপ খাওয়াইয়া, সেই অদৃশ্য প্লানের সঙ্গে মিলাইয়া যাইতে হয়; ইহাতেই তাহার ক্ষমতা প্রকাশ পায় এবং এইজন্তই তাহাকে সাধারণ মজুরের মতো কেহ সামান্য বেতন দেয় না, তাহাকে ওস্তাদের মতো সম্মান করিয়া থাকে। ( “বিশ্বসাহিত্য” )

আঞ্চলিক গ্রাম্যতার সংকীর্ণ বৃত্ত থেকে বেরিয়ে এসে আমাদের এবং অন্যান্য ভারতবর্ষীয়ের জাতীয় সাহিত্য কী পরিমাণে প্রথমে ভারতীয় সাহিত্য এবং সেই সঙ্গে বিশ্বসাহিত্যের রাজপথে পৌঁছতে পেরেছে সেইটে নির্ণয় করার দিকে মনোযোগ দিতে পারলে, একমাত্র তখন আমরা বুঝতে পারবো এ-বিষয়ে রবীন্দ্রনাথের প্রভাব কোথায় কী ভাবে এবং কতদূর কার্যকরী হয়েছে। সেই প্রবর্তনা নিয়ে ভারতীয় সাহিত্যের তুলনামূলক ইতিহাস রচনার কাজ অবিলম্বে শুরু হওয়া দরকার।

## **KĀDAMBARĪ AND THE ART OF FRAMING LIES : A STUDY IN STORYTELLING**

Victorian sensibility colours the first attempt at evaluating Bāṇa-bhaṭṭa's magnificent Sanskrit narrative, *Kādambarī*. In 1835, Macaulay, issuing his famous minute on education in India, delivered this equally notorious opinion on Sanskrit literature :

I have no knowledge of either Sanscrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanscrit works. I have conversed both here and at home with men distinguished by their proficiency in the Eastern tongues. I am quite ready to take the Oriental learning at the valuation of the Orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.<sup>1</sup>

Five years later James Mill, in a lengthy chapter on "The Literature of the Hindus", wrote of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* :

They are excessively prolix and insipid. They are often, through long passages, trifling and childish to a degree, which those acquainted with only European poetry can hardly conceive. Of the style in which they are composed it is far from too much to say, that all the vices which characterize the style of rude nations, and particularly those of Asia, they exhibit in perfection. Inflation; metaphors perpetual, and these the most violent and strained, often the most unnatural and ridiculous; obscurity; tautology; repetition; verbosity; confusion; incoherence; distinguish the Mahabharat and Ramayan.<sup>2</sup>

In 1853 *Kādambarī* was reviewed by Albrecht Weber, one of the

part of his criticism, as translated by Peter Peterson for use in the introduction to his Sanskrit edition of *Kādambarī* :

[*Kādambarī*] compares most unfavourably with the *Daśakumāracarita* by a subtlety and tautology which are almost repugnant, by an outrageous overloading of single words with epithets : the narrative proceeds in a strain of bombastic nonsense, amidst which it—and if not it, then the patience of the reader—threatens to perish altogether : a mannerism, already apparent in the *Daśakumāracarita*, is here carried to excess : the verb is kept back to the second, third, fourth, nay, once to the sixth page, and all the interval is filled with epithets and epithets to these epithets : moreover these epithets frequently consist of compounds extending over more than one line : in short, Bāṇa's prose is an Indian wood, where all progress is rendered impossible by the undergrowth until the traveller cuts out a path for himself, and where, even then, he has to reckon with malicious wild beasts in the shape of unknown words that affright him.<sup>4</sup>

Probably there is no statement about any work of literary art quite like this one because it was and is accepted totally, without reservation or question, by nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars, both Western and Indian. It has been directly quoted, paraphrased, alluded to, and even presented as if it were the author's own assessment of *Kādambarī*.

Writers on India or on the Orient such as Nirad C. Chaudhuri, V.S. Naipaul and Edward Said suggest reasons for what can only be called a dogged adherence to the opinions and attitudes of the West : the overwhelming impact of a new breed of invader who came to catalogue, preserve and, in passing, evaluate. A quote by James Prinsep, on the title page of one of the nineteenth-century *Archaeological Survey Reports*, clearly speaks of the aims many scholars and investigators had during those halcyon days : "What the learned world demands of us in India is to be quite certain of our data, to place the monumental record before them, and to interpret it faithfully and literally (emphasis mine)."<sup>5</sup>

Weber's criticism of *Kādambarī*, taking a nineteenth-century stance regarding things oriental and shaped by what from a modern viewpoint was an understandable ignorance about things literary, should not have been maintained up to the present day. But today's historians of culture, orientalist and literary comparatists have one thing very much in common : a suspicion regarding the validity of applying literary criticism, however they understand it, to works

of literature such as *Kādambarī*. This way of thinking has its antecedents. In 1966 Eugene Vinaver, in an address to the Modern Humanities Research Association, made the observation that

there was a time not long ago, both at Oxford and elsewhere, when medieval texts were read with the utmost care, but emphatically not as literary texts. They were read as examples of a great many things other than literature : of the diffusion of folklore, of the ideas and feelings they expressed, of the language in which they were written, of the type of civilization to which they belonged. They were assigned to a respectable academic discipline which was quite distinct from such lighter pursuits as literary criticism and aesthetic appreciation.<sup>6</sup>

Indian literature, along with other oriental literatures, has been assigned a similar place in the halls of academe, and to date no Western literary critic by word or by deed has given an adequate response to nineteenth-century statements such as these from C.M. Ridding's introduction to her translation of *Kādambarī* :

...“*Kādambarī*” will always have value as representing the ways of thinking and feeling which were either customary or welcome at its own time, and which have continued to charm Indian readers. ...Another source of interest in “*Kādambarī*” lies in its contribution to folklore. It may perhaps contain nothing not found elsewhere, but the fact of its having a date gives it a value.<sup>7</sup>

Nor has any critic countered the twentieth-century opinion that literary criticism of oriental literature is an interdisciplinary or cross-cultural study and represents, at best, a spurious pursuit :

Western approaches to literature may not only be passively irrelevant to one's appreciation of the Indian tradition, but may actually foster and encourage principles of criticism that make unintelligible the literature one wishes to study.<sup>8</sup>

Acceptance of either or both ways of thinking leads to a kind of intellectual starvation, as far as what we can come to know about literature. There is an even graver danger in the latter pronouncement, for, as W.K. Wimsatt notes in *The Verbal Icon*, we may write “a defence of some mean work of literature just because we have come to understand the conventions according to which it was written.”<sup>9</sup> Conversely, we may never know works such as *Kādambarī* because of the uninformed, often rather silly things which were, and

Most Western scholars only know of great works of the Indian tradition such as the *Rāmāyaṇa* (also called "The *Iliad* of India") and *Śakuntalā* (written by the "Indian Shakespeare"). They have glossed over or forgotten the connections and influences which gave rise to much of Europe's finest literature. They pretend that the barriers of time, culture and language are too great; that linguistic, cultural, historical, religious and philosophical study must precede any apprehension of 'foreign' literature; and that only those literatures which have genetic connections can rightfully be the occasion of scholarship.

My subject here is literature as represented by one particular work of literature. Those who question such study might in turn be asked: what is it that makes for the fact that we recognize a work of fiction such as *Kādambarī*, however strange or 'alien' some of its parts may be? Why has no culture ever given rise to a literature which is *totally* inexplicable to any other culture? The issue is not one of problems of translation or of appreciation, but one of *recognition*. There is no such thing as a literature foreign to our experience of literature. There are only literatures and works of literature as yet unexperienced by us. Like so many suspension bridges constructed out of multifarious and fantastical building materials (otherwise known as story-lines, plots, texture, imagery, figurative language, mythic elements), they sway over a vast sea of cultures and civilizations. These creations may well contain peculiar elements or tell unusual, unfamiliar stories, but they have certain definable properties which cannot be ignored, either by the reader or the artist.

Authors as different from one another in time and culture as Edmund Spenser<sup>10</sup> and John Cheever<sup>11</sup> perform the same kinds of literary maneuvers; they exploit and expand their legacies of cultural and literary materials as much by choice as by the demands their works make on them in the process of creation. A writer has a relationship of a most complex symbiosis with his work of art which he as well as his readers and critics can only begin to understand. Anthony Powell says of his extraordinary novel, *A Dance to the Music of Time*, that he had no elaborately worked-out scheme when he started the work in the late 1940's: "The thing just grew. The more I did it, the less I understood. If the thing's working properly what happens to the characters is inevitable."<sup>12</sup>

In the next few pages I explore the “inevitability” of *Kādambarī*’s shape and some of the kinds and operations of literary devices which control and inform its seemingly inchoate mass of stories and descriptions. There is no fancy, muscle-bound tag on my method. I characterize it as an act of definition and identification, a pursuit of the whys and hows of *Kādambarī*’s artistic structure. That structure, or organization, both powers the narrative and gives it certain powers. *Kādambarī* is *how it is because of what it is about*. The unpacking of this statement and of *Kādambarī* is the business at hand.

Nietzsche observed that “the commonly accepted categories of art are beauty and illusion.” Aristotle, a more tempered and scientific sort, almost throws away this statement on what comprises the literary art: “Homer more than any other has taught the rest of us the art of framing lies in the right way.” ‘Lies’ is perhaps a somewhat tougher word than ‘illusion’, but the essence is the same. Bāṇa, in the way he handled his story and plot, was of like mind, but he takes note of another element which, not too incidentally, is part of why his narrative is as it is.

This comment, woven rather innocuously into the narrative’s welcome mat, embodies the reason for *Kādambarī*’s design, the motivation behind the ‘how’ of it:

A novel story, charming with sparkling conversations and love-sportings,  
Which takes its form of composition from its mood,  
Creates in the heart pleasure heightened by curiosity;  
Just as a new bride,  
Captivating with scintillating coqueties and sweet speech,  
Who, impelled out of love, comes of her own accord to her lord’s couch,  
Creates in the heart passion stirred by anticipation.<sup>13</sup>

A story (*kathā*) creates pleasure (*rāga*) heightened by curiosity (*kautuka*). A tentative definition of literature, then, might be that it is a frame of lies made up of beauty and illusion for the purpose of pleasure which is partly derived from curiosity as to the kind and quality of the lies framed. *Kādambarī*’s organization—its artistic structure—is a frame of lies embracing various and sundry other lies and deceptions. It is filled with likely impossibilities (again Aristotle) and tells us that such is the ‘real world’, nothing more or less than a frame of lies crammed with likely impossibilities.



In the Indian view, no more so than in the Western, reality is thought to be an illusion, seen dimly, if at all, through the veil of *māyā*. But Hindu philosophy also embodies the belief that *behind* the illusion is a cosmos in never-ending flux where all things come to pass again and again in a cycle of birth-death-rebirth. In such a universe nothing is ever what it seems to be, so that the flow between nature and myth becomes a steady stream which easily accommodates both fact *and* fancy. This is part of what *Kādambarī* is about: the supreme illusion that we can know reality at the level of life on earth, while the cosmos forever wheels through eons of formation and dissolution, repeating endlessly what we think comes but once. *Kādambarī* is a work of art which truly imitates life, where life cannot be known directly but must be approached obliquely through myths or stories which function as high priests to its mysteries.

There is a Western work similar to *Kādambarī*, and one which surprisingly functions in the same way because it too is about the illusory nature of the world and the way we come to know life through myths. The *Idylls of the King*, Tennyson's dim rich poem, creates a masterful illusion which works as it does because of its ostensible theme, the fabulous story of Camelot, played off against Tennyson's sense of despair and loss diluted in a peculiar way by his certainty, as expressed in the poem, that "nothing ever happens only once and everything that happens, happens simultaneously to its opposite ... growth and decay, soul and sense, reality and illusion, time and eternity."<sup>14</sup> As with *Kādambarī*, "nothing in the [*Idylls*] is as it seems, and nothing seems to be what it is", but unlike *Kādambarī*, which aims at that pleasure heightened by curiosity, the *Idylls* is "about the hazards of mistaking illusion for reality; it *dramatically enacts* those dangers, ensnaring the reader in the same delusions that maim and destroy its characters."<sup>15</sup>

In one sense *Idylls* is a framing of lies (illusion) about a frame of lies (reality). *Kādambarī*, on the other hand, is about the way reality and illusion blend in the world and in fiction, and there is, Bāṇa suggests, nothing fearful in this blend—this snare of *māyā* or illusion. The fearfulness the *Idylls* engenders and the terrible sadness we feel at its conclusion are results of our belief, or our *wanting* to believe, in Arthur and the viability of Camelot. Tennyson mercilessly forces us to the knowledge we think we have about reality:

contains an odd glimmer of hope that there are, as Rosenberg notes, cycles, of "change and permanence, of time and eternity." Arthur's world comes to an ugly, cold end, as does our own, surely, but the last line of the poem ushers in an intimation of those cycles of seasons, of time, and of rebirth and second comings: "And the new sun rose bringing the new year."

*Kādambarī* ends in an almost typical fairy-tale way. The lovers blissfully go off to enjoy one another, happily ever after. But *Kādambarī*'s story and its theme of cyclic change and permanence tell us these things are transient, will pass away and yet come to pass again. In Bāṇa's story that is the wonder of it all. All the actions of gods and men will be repeated, have been repeated. Everything has been and has yet to be. *Kādambarī* ends on the upswing of a cycle, whereas *Idylls* concludes on the downswing. What is most intriguing about Bāṇa's story is that it alone of all the elements used to compose it seems to be unique. There is no story of *Kādambarī* in Indian mythology. Bāṇa's narrative is the beginning of the myth of *Kādambarī*. Tennyson's story about Camelot, which not only has a special part in Western mythology but also is a symbol of enormous power, is the *end* of the myth of Camelot and the *beginning* of the myth of his own *Idylls*. Unlike Tennyson, who destroys one myth to make another, Bāṇa forms his myth out of suggestions that there is room for *Kādambarī* and her adventure with the moon-god. (He chose a god who had very little in the way of mythic or story life before, so he did not have to usurp or alter any conventional myths.)

Both artists were making myths out of the raw materials of their traditions' stock of story material. And both came up with the same view of the world: that it is illusory and that the only reality is that the illusion comes again and again; that time runs in cycles while eternity stands still. This perception of the real nature of things gave some hope and solace to Tennyson, although his smashing of the myth of Camelot is his way of railing against the framing of lies. For Bāṇa it was simply a fact of life and of his art.

These comparisons of *Kādambarī* and *Idylls* are made not to show how the works have similar messages, or even similar structures, but to emphasize that certain literary devices and techniques (ways to frame lies) contribute to literature's beauty and illusion, no matter

the literary art to imitate life in the real and in the mythic worlds of their respective traditions. It seems that the "art of framing lies in the right way" is a curious and curiously concrete way of dealing with how we know what we know. Reality is an illusion, and art, using illusion, is an imitation of reality. Perhaps the more sophisticated and subtle is the expression of this paradox, the greater our pleasure.

*Kādambarī* is a self-conscious exploration of the illusory nature of the world and the equally illusory nature of art. It is how it is because of what it is about, in every single atom of its make-up, and *that* is the sheer pleasure of it, heightened by a curiosity produced and fed by the elements of its artistic structure. Bāṇa's contrivance is riddled with suggestions that, however delightful it may be, it is more than a good story fleshed out with descriptive language which is itself a tour de force of Sanskrit poetic conventions and conceits. We find that what is illuminated with one hand is put into shadow with the other. The lies are constantly hinted at. It is for the reader to catch Bāṇa in framing them.

*Kādambarī* can be viewed as a rational, temporal sequence of incidents, related in a familiar way ; in short, it can be summarized as a situation in which 'boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl.' However, Bāṇa took that same sequence of incidents and, among other things, restructured it. In doing so, he made the sequence unfamiliar, having shivered its temporality into seemingly episodic digressions so that, at best, we can say that *Kādambarī* is a situation in which 'boy loses girl, boy gets girl, boy meets girl.'

The rational sequence of incidents is a kind of blueprint for the artistically structured sequence and is one which Bāṇa surely drew up, for his son nicely completes his own part of the work after picking it up at a point where the seemingly meandering series of events has no possible resolution or sensible conclusion.<sup>10</sup> There are no surprises in the rational sequence, no labyrinthine turns, only a steady progression from a beginning through a middle to an end. Our pleasure is minimal, the curiosity almost nil. On the other hand, Bāṇa's arrangement of that sequence displays the cunning machinery of *Kādambarī*'s design and pushes us toward further inquiry into the narrative itself.

*Kādambarī* is flush with stories : people tell each other stories or they allude to known stories ; the similes are packed with stories and

in turn pack the narrative with stories ; the major storyteller, Vaiśampāyana the parrot, even bears the name of a most illustrious singer of tales—the narrator of the *Mahābhārata*. Much of what *Kādambarī* is about, then, is the telling of stories. In fact, it is a felicitous exemplification of three recognizable ways of getting stories told, in the Indian as well as in the Western traditions. These schematic devices, or techniques, are fairly common literary strategies. In *Kādambarī* they have been altered somewhat, the reasons to become clear as I proceed through a description of them. For purposes of shorthand and simplification, I have called them the Frame, the Prism, and the Time-machine.

The Frame is a story in the course of which other stories are told. The framed stories are not necessarily related, in theme or subject-matter, but have been pulled together under the guise of a storytelling situation, the frame story. Often, as in the case of *The Arabian Nights*—primarily cited as the West's 'Eastern connection' with this method—the *Kathāsaritsāgara* or sections of the *Mahābhārata*, the stories are completely unrelated. In works such as *The Canterbury Tales*, the *Daśakumāracarita*, the *Śukasaptati*, or *The Decameron*, the stories are in some ways connected to or are resonances of the frame story.

*Kādambarī* has traditionally been placed in the frame category because it seems to contain stories embedded within stories. The frame is Śūdraka's court, described in the third person, to which Vaiśampāyana comes and tells his story, which contains Jābālī's narration, which contains Mahāśvetā's story, all told in the first person. After Vaiśampāyana finishes his story, Śūdraka, who has been apprised of his real identity as the moon-god and of his separation from Kādambarī, begins to pine away out of longing for her. At that point the frame is suddenly ruptured and the world of Jābālī's narration takes over, the narration now shifting into the third person.

If the reader has not become aware that what he is dealing with is by no means a 'typical' Frame by *Kādambarī*'s other devices and techniques, then he should certainly become aware of this by the time the frame story is ruptured. The frame does not remain intact and proves to be something other than a mere enclosure for various tales. All the stories are related to one another and absolutely integral to *Kādambarī*'s story. The frame story itself, revealed not

to be the main story at all, is in fact taken over by one of its own framed stories. Śūdraka the audience becomes Śūdraka the actor.

This is an outright violation of an established literary form, and it shows up in a literary tradition the forms, subject matter, and effects of which are thought to be so rigidly circumscribed and so thoroughly culture-bound that they are the controlling agents which allow us only limited access to the literature :

But are we for ever to judge Indian literature by standards so foreign to it ? ... In finding one's way one must seek guidance from those versed in the tradition, from the great critics of the ninth to the thirteenth centuries, and from those few modern Indians and fewer Europeans who can understand and interpret their works.<sup>17</sup>

"Those versed in the tradition" have yet to recognize *Kādambarī* as anything other than a simple, if clumsy, frame story.

I suggest that Bāṇa consciously used the Frame, which he modified as just shown, in conjunction with two other techniques which he also somewhat changed to suit *Kādambarī*'s identity. The effect of the ruptured Frame is to throw the reader's expectations out of kilter. Not only has the normal order of a story been disrupted, one of the 'normal' ways of telling a story, or stories, has been challenged. The narrative almost becomes a self-conscious parody of the Frame—and even of storytelling in general. It is one of the several ways Bāṇa gives *Kādambarī* its aura of illusion—by this kind of questioning, throwing into doubt, and accentuating the artfulness and artifice of the way literature works.

Another storytelling technique which informs *Kādambarī*'s artistic structure is the Prism. It is also a common way of getting a story told. Just as a prism disperses light into a spectrum, the Prism plot develops the core of a story. The narration takes the form of a prismatic representation, with its bare outlines coloured and shaded by highly varied expansions and magnifications. The Prism accentuates as well as develops. It is a way of getting out all the facts or viewpoints. It is seen a great deal, for example, in the *Mahābhārata* and in a different form in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

In the *Mahābhārata* a story is briefly, often rather perfunctorily told, after which the narrator is asked for certain amplifications or details. Later he may be asked for even more details from the main story or from the one he tells by way of elaboration. The main,

or core, story gets retold to some extent, but mostly a scene or segment gets expanded—stretched in different directions—as a result of the demands for more and more narration. The dimensions of a seemingly simple tale are altered, more details giving the story more depth. A working through one example will illustrate the pattern and show how it differs from the Frame.

Arjuna asks a Gandharva why he called Arjuna “Tāpatya” :

You have been calling me “Tāpatya”, therefore I want to know what “Tāpatya” exactly means. Who was the woman named Tapatī after whom we are called “Tāpatya”, as we are called “Kaunteya” after Kuntī ?”

The Gandharva tells the story of Tapati, the sun’s daughter, who, with an early Paurava king, produces Kuru. In that story a seer, Vasiṣṭha, is mentioned. Arjuna asks about the seer and the Gandharva briefly narrates Vasiṣṭha’s story. Arjuna then says, “What caused the feud between Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra, who both lived in holy hermitages ? Tell it to us all.” And so the story entitled “Vasiṣṭha” is narrated.

The telling of the *Mahābhārata* itself uses this same technique. The bard is implored, “Tell us that ancient Lore that was related by the eminent sage Dvaipāyana, which the Gods and brahmin seers honoured when they heard it !” After he delivers the list of contents, the seers say, “This Samantapañcaka (a region mentioned in the contents) you spoke of, son of the Bard, we wish to hear it described in full as it really is.” After *that* telling :

Son of the Bard, you spoke of “armies”. We wish to learn exactly what the strength of an “army” is, in men, chariots, horses, and elephants. Tell it to us precisely, for you know everything !

Later he is asked :

How did Baron Janamejaya massacre the Snakes, friend, or say, good brahmin, why were the Snakes rescued by this Āstika. Relate it fully ; I wish to hear it.

And at the beginning of the next book he is asked again :

Why did King Janamejaya, a tiger among kings, carry on with the full Snake Sacrifice until all Snakes were finished ? Tell me that ! And why did that excellent brahmin Āstika, the best of the mumblers of spells, have the Snakes set free from the fire that blazed forth ? Whose son was that king who offered the Snake sacrifice ? And tell me, whose son was that

This particular way of getting into a story and of getting certain details or events in a story fleshed out recurs throughout the *Mahābhārata*. Also, a modification of this form of the Prism, which we see in the *Metamorphoses* and in *Kādambarī*, occurs in the epic. After a fairly detailed summation of the entire *Mahābhārata* story, Vaiśampāyana is addressed thus by Janamejaya :

Indeed, you have recounted in summary, O eminent brahmin, the entire Epic of the *Mahābhārata*, the Great Geste of the Kurus. But now blameless ascetic, a great curiosity has arisen in me to hear the entire story, with its manifold matters, recounted by you in all its detail. Sir, you must repeat it to me again and entire, for I cannot hear enough of the deeds of the ancient.

Surely it was no small cause for which the law-abiding Pāṇḍavas killed those they should never have slain, and could still be extolled by men. Why did those tigers among men, capable and guiltless though they were, condone the oppressions to which evil men subjected them? How could the Wolf-Belly, who with his two arms had the mettle of myriad elephants, hold his fury even when he was set upon, best of the twiceborn? Why did Kṛṣṇā Draupadī, beset by evil-minded men, fail—capable as she was—to burn the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra with her evil eye? Why did the two sons of Pṛthā and the two sons of Mādri later follow the tiger among men, when those crooks had cheated him in a dishonest game at dice? How could that best of the upholders of the Law, the son of Dharma, who knew the Law, endure such extreme oppression, of which he was undeserving—and how could Arjuna? Arjuna who with Kṛṣṇa as his charioteer send alone whole large armies to the world of the dead with his arrows?

Tell it to me all as it happened, ascetic—all that those great warriors wrought in every instance.

When used in the *Metamorphoses* this kind of Prism is compressed even more and becomes a more direct, perhaps more efficient, way of engendering a story or stories. Perseus narrates a tale in which he mentions Medusa. Then :

And he went on to tell them of his journeys,  
His perils over land and sea, the stars  
He had brushed on flying pinions. And they wanted  
Still more, and someone asked him why Medusa,  
Alone of all the sisters, was snaky-haired.  
Their guest replied, "That, too, is a tale worth telling."<sup>11</sup>

Much closer, almost identical, to what we see in the *Mahābhārata* and in *Kādambarī* is when Nestor is asked for a story which is suggested in his telling of another story :

I can recall another, long ago,  
Whose body took a thousand blows, unharmed,  
What was his name now ? Caeneus, that was it,  
Caeneus of Thessaly, Thessalian Caeneus.  
He once dwelt on Mount Othrys and was famous  
For all he did, but the strange thing about it  
Is, he was born a woman." All who listened  
Clamoured to hear the story, and Achilles  
Was urgent : "Tell us father : you are wise  
And eloquent ; we all want to hear about him.  
Who was this Caeneus ? why changed ? who fought him ?  
Who beat him if he ever was beaten ? where,  
In what campaign did you know him ?..."<sup>20</sup>

The Prism is the same technique in both the *Mahābhārata* and the *Metamorphoses*. In the former, it is usually drawn out, making for a more leisurely storytelling situation, in the latter its compression makes for an economy of line and of storytelling moment.

In *Kādambarī* the Prism is also compressed. Vaiśampāyana the parrot is addressed by Śūdraka.

Let all this be and satisfy our curiosity. Please, tell us, from your birth on and in detail : where and how were you born ? who named you ? who is your mother ? your father ? how did you acquire knowledge of the Vedas ? of the Śāstras ? from whom did you acquire skill in the fine arts ; did you recollect them from former birth, or was it a special boon ; or are you someone who dwells secretly in the guise of a bird ? where did you formerly live ? how old are you ? why this encaged bondage ? how have you come to be in the hands of Cāṇḍālas ? how did you come to be brought here ?

Vaiśampāyana answers : "Your Majesty, this is a very long story, but if you are curious it will be told."

Jābāli is asked by the assembly of ascetics :

Tell us, please, of what misbehaviour is he experiencing the fruit ? Who was he in his former birth ? How did he come to take on the feathered caste ? What is his name ? Satisfy our curiosity, for you, the blessed one,



The sage tells them, "This amazing story which you request me tell is a very long one." And later, as he prepares to launch into the telling of it, "If you are so curious, then listen."

Candrāpīḍa says to Mahāśvetā :

...I should like to be favoured by your talking to me, for great indeed has been my curiosity in this matter since I first laid eyes upon you. Which family of gods, sages, Gandharvas, Guhyakas, or Apsaras has been favoured by your birth ? Why have you taken a vow at such an early age when you are blossom-tender ? Whence this youth ! Whence this form ! Whence this transcendent loveliness ! And whence this tranquillity of senses ! All this seems to be quite wonderful. Why do you live alone in this uninhabited forest, avoiding divine hermitages accessible in the Celestial World and frequented by many Siddhas and Sādhyas ? And how is it that your body possesses such whiteness though it be composed of the five Great Elements ? I have never seen, nor heard of such a thing anywhere else before. Please satisfy my curiosity and tell me everything.

After much consternation and tears, Mahāśvetā answers :

Oh prince, what is to be gained by hearing the story of my renunciation of the world ... ? Still, if you are so very curious, I shall tell it. Please listen.

Kapiñjala is questioned by Mahāśvetā who wants to know more about Puṇḍarīka :

Oh sir, what is his name ? Of what great ascetic is he the son ? And what is the name of the tree to which this spray of flowers he uses as an ornament belongs ? Its spreading fragrance and its extraordinary perfume are such as I have never smelled before and have aroused a great curiosity in me.

Kapiñjala answers, "Oh young lady, what purpose is served by these questions ? Still, if you are curious, I shall tell you. Listen."

The Prism technique is used in only three major sections and one minor section of *Kādambarī* : the stories of Vaiśampāyana, Jābālī, Mahāśvetā, and Kapiñjala. There are several other occasions when events are related or stories told to clarify a situation or make a point, but they do not include all the ingredients of the above citations. Firstly, there is a series of questions which in each case includes a key question or clue as to the central issue or events of the story to come. Vaiśampāyana is asked if he recollected his great knowledge from a former birth ; Jābālī is asked to tell for what kind

of misbehaviour Vaiśampāyana is suffering the degrading caste of a bird ; Candrāpiḍa asks Mahāśvetā, the Apsaras and daughter of a Gandharva, to tell him which family of gods, sages, Gandharvas, Guhyakas, or Apsaras has been favoured by her birth ; and Kapiñjala is asked to tell what great sage fathered Puṇḍarika.

Secondly, the narrator *always* says, "If you are so curious, I shall tell it." In the minor story segments (as when Keyūra tells Candrāpiḍa of Kādambari's activities after his departure, or when Kapiñjala tells of his adventures when chasing the moon-god) we see a series of questions, but that seemingly innocuous "if you are so curious" is missing. What does that phrase actually signal ?

What follows it is *always* a story which seems to start at the very beginning. Vaiśampāyana's story begins with a description of the Vindhya Forest and works down to the very hollow of the tree in which the parrot was born and spent its first weeks of life. Jābāli's story of Vaiśampāyana's past begins well before Vaiśampāyana's birth, with a description of the city of Ujjayinī and its ruler Tārāpiḍa, whose minister Śukanāsa will become Vaiśampāyana's father. Mahāśvetā's story begins with her lineage which is founded in the race of the Apsaras and the Gandharvas. Kapiñjala's story of Puṇḍarika begins prior to Puṇḍarika's conception by the Goddess of Fortune upon seeing the sage Śvetaketu.

The other 'stories' in *Kādambari* either begin in the middle or are brief summaries. Tārāpiḍa gives Vilāsavati two examples of how sons were acquired by the powers of great sages ; Candrāpiḍa, gazing at Indrāyudha for the first time, recalls to himself the story of Rambhā, the Apsaras who, upon being cursed, transferred herself to the heart of a horse and served a king for some time ; Candrāpiḍa gives Mahāśvetā examples of how women did not follow their husbands in death and how various men who had died returned to life.

A story (*kathā*) creates pleasure (*rāga*) heightened by curiosity (*kautuka*). It is curiosity which engenders stories in the *Mahābhārata* and in the *Metamorphoses*, and which is why stories get told in *Kādambari*.<sup>31</sup> The technique seen in the epic gets tightened up and packed with more significance in *Kādambari*, but it is essentially the same way of getting into a story. By not allowing his audience in the story to interrupt the narrative as is done in the *Mahābhārata*—

'listening' to a story being told about a story being told about a story being told, and so on. (In the English translation, of course, one is constantly reminded of the telling of stories within stories by the quotation marks, but in Sanskrit there is no such punctuation.)

Bāṇa accedes to the audience's unspoken need to know every single detail of the story by giving it as fully as possible—one reason, perhaps, for the extensive descriptive passages. But he has also manipulated certain of his audience's expectations and thrown them into questions. The clues are given in the setup for the story, and they are resolved in the process of the story's telling. The reader is being given two messages in those setups : one, that the story is to contain certain information ; two, oddly enough, that the person asking for the story already seems to know it because of the kinds of questions he or she asks. We would expect the questioner to 'know' certain details or facts about a story he is requesting, if the story is a common or traditional one. But this would not be the case if the one asking for a story is asking for something original to his experience, or original to his stock of stories.<sup>22</sup> The reader of *Kādambarī* is being given clues, both overt and covert, as to the nature of the stories he is going to read.

The Prism insures that the reader will be prepared for a detailed, fully told story. Bāṇa's little ruse is that, of course, the stories are no such thing. They do not 'really' begin at the beginning, nor do they give all the information the storyteller has at his disposal regarding his tale. For example, Jābāli knows everything as if he held the world "like an *āmalaka* fruit in the palm of his hand." He knows Vaiśampāyana's true identity as Puṇḍarika, two lives previous to his incarnation as a parrot. Yet the 'beginning' of his story about Vaiśampāyana is prior to Vaiśampāyana's birth as Vaiśampāyana the minister's son and friend to Candrāpīḍa, not as Puṇḍarika, son of Śvetaketu. It is only at the break in the Frame, in fact, that we come to know that the Prism has also not played entirely fair with us, any more than it has with *Kādambarī*'s characters.

Bāṇa's idea that a story is told in order to provide pleasure heightened by curiosity is one he made concrete in the form of *Kādambarī*'s artistic structures which is like a wonderful puzzle, tensing and tantalizing to the very end, all the while pretending to be but a story. The third storytelling technique is one of the more subtle twists in *Kādambarī*'s plot. It is a common enough technique

and in its freer forms provides the reader with a good deal of pleasure and curiosity. I call this technique the Time-machine, and it is one of form, as are the Frame and Prism, as well as one of startling and memorable effect.

A time machine is somewhat like a unicorn—impossible in nature yet capable of life in the fabulous world of imagination. We accept its 'reality' as much as we do that of the unicorn whose presence invades art from tapestries to Thurber. In H.G. Wells's story the time machine takes its inventor into the future where he witnesses the evolutionary decline of life and society. The time machine works on the assumption that the past, present, and future are static facts of matter and action, that it is only an illusion that time has already been and has yet to be. This illusory nature of time is the basis of Time-machine stories as well. The form this effect has taken, literally over the centuries, is found in the Indian, Chinese and European traditions.<sup>23</sup> It is a particular, and rather peculiar, way of telling a story such that the reader as well as a character in the story are deluded. The reader of other kinds of stories chooses to accept the fantasy or effect of the story. In narratives of the Time-machine type, the reader has no such choice.

Basically, the story is about a man who asks a magician for some sort of display of power or for a favour. The man's life is changed. Years pass and one day he suddenly finds himself back where he started, only a few moments of time having passed. The sequence of events is such that at no time in any of the versions of the story is the reader made aware of the 'real' action, nor is he given any clues that make him suspect that he and the story's characters are involved in a deception controlled by the author.

The Time-machine is a surprisingly sophisticated way to get a story told. In a 'normal' storytelling situation the narrator and the listener have between them a kind of trust that a story may be composed of certain probable impossibilities and may move in a certain way, depending on how the impossible not only becomes possible, but natural and even inevitable. The Time-machine holds back one ingredient—one probable impossibility—from both the reader and the story's main character—and it is thus that inside *and* outside the story an effect based on the impossible becomes inevitable: surprise at the subversion of expectations. The narrator or poet has, in fact,

expectations are turned upside down. The fictional character is shown how magicians, or gods, have great powers of illusion, and the reader is reminded how literary art has the same powers of illusion. The Time-machine lures the reader inside its frame of lies and then forcefully ejects him at the end, jolting him, as well as the character in the story, into an awareness of the illusory nature of things.

The story, in whatever version, works only one way. It always has the same theme and each segment must follow the one before it in order for the trick to work. Bāṇa achieves the same *effect* by taking his story, which is *not* a Time-machine story, rearranging its segments, and changing its third-person narrator to a combination of first-person narrators. *Kādambarī* works the same way as a Time-machine story (including its peculiar jolting of the flow of time), but its theme is entirely different: there is no deliberate delusion merely for the sake of delusion of its characters, no extraordinary or divine powers are being tested, no lesson is being taught. What Bāṇa took from the Time-machine for his own purposes is the *idea* of setting up a situation which leads to a shocking or surprising climax and which involves his reader in the deception, using the reader's expectations regarding both the usual shape of a story and the way time is usually observed in a story.

Bāṇa has used three of his tradition's most familiar storytelling techniques and exploited his reader's expectations of those techniques. His subtle transformations show that he had a clear sense of the properties and effects of those techniques and that he was consciously using them to conceal as well as signal the mechanism of his plot. *Kādambarī*'s Frame is like a marvellous bauble-filled purse which suddenly is rent and spills its contents at the moment of climax when Śūdraka and the reader together reach a sort of epiphany about life and art. The "tell me a story and make it complete" mechanism which works the Prism allowed Bāṇa comfortably to ease his audience—real and fanciful—into what seems to be the most detailed of stories, while he stocked his descriptive passages with any number of hints that those stories are anything but complete. His Time-machine effect is a resonance of the story's insistence on the illusory nature of things.

There are no accidents in the structuring of *Kādambarī*. Bāṇa was telling not just a good story, but a story's story. He could have

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The Time-machine is a surprisingly sophisticated way to get a story told. In a 'normal' storytelling situation the narrator and the listener have between them a kind of trust that a story may be composed of certain probable impossibilities and may move in a certain way, depending on how the impossible not only becomes possible, but natural and even inevitable. The Time-machine holds back one ingredient—one probable impossibility—from both the reader and the story's main character—and it is thus that inside *and* outside the story an effect based on the impossible becomes inevitable: surprise at the subversion of expectations. The narrator or poet has, in fact,

expectations are turned upside down. The fictional character is shown how magicians, or gods, have great powers of illusion, and the reader is reminded how literary art has the same powers of illusion. The Time-machine lures the reader inside its frame of lies and then forcefully ejects him at the end, jolting him, as well as the character in the story, into an awareness of the illusory nature of things.

The story, in whatever version, works only one way. It always has the same theme and each segment must follow the one before it in order for the trick to work. Bāṇa achieves the same *effect* by taking his story, which is *not* a Time-machine story, rearranging its segments, and changing its third-person narrator to a combination of first-person narrators. *Kādambarī* works the same way as a Time-machine story (including its peculiar jolting of the flow of time), but its theme is entirely different: there is no deliberate delusion merely for the sake of delusion of its characters, no extraordinary or divine powers are being tested, no lesson is being taught. What Bāṇa took from the Time-machine for his own purposes is the *idea* of setting up a situation which leads to a shocking or surprising climax and which involves his reader in the deception, using the reader's expectations regarding both the usual shape of a story and the way time is usually observed in a story.

Bāṇa has used three of his tradition's most familiar storytelling techniques and exploited his reader's expectations of those techniques. His subtle transformations show that he had a clear sense of the properties and effects of those techniques and that he was consciously using them to conceal as well as signal the mechanism of his plot. *Kādambarī*'s Frame is like a marvellous bauble-filled purse which suddenly is rent and spills its contents at the moment of climax when Śūdraka and the reader together reach a sort of epiphany about life and art. The "tell me a story and make it complete" mechanism which works the Prism allowed Bāṇa comfortably to ease his audience—real and fanciful—into what seems to be the most detailed of stories, while he stocked his descriptive passages with any number of hints that those stories are anything but complete. His Time-machine effect is a resonance of the story's insistence on the illusory nature of things.

There are no accidents in the structuring of *Kādambarī*. Bāṇa was telling not just a good story, but a story's story. He could have

stayed with any one of the storytelling techniques he used—all are valid, widely used ways of getting a tale told. By modifying each and synthesizing the Frame and Prism—two ways of getting stories told—with the Time-machine—a way of getting stories reacted to—Bāṇa created a kind of synergistic effect. At the level of its plot alone, *Kādambarī* has authority and integrity, based on the working together of three techniques used to construct stories. The techniques work together and increase each other's effects, each one in itself having certain strengths which complement the other techniques. Thus it is that *Kādambarī* is a most artful and subtle example of the fine art of "framing lies in the right way".

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#### NOTES

- 1 *Macaulay : Prose and Poetry*, selected by G.M. Young (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), p. 722.
- 2 *The History of British India* (London, 1840), pp. 51-52.
- 3 "Analyse der Kādambarī", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 7 (1853), 582-589.
- 4 Bāṇa, *Kādambarī* (Bombay, 1884), p. 37.
- 5 *Four Reports Made During the Years 1862-63-64-65 by Alexander Cunningham* (Simla, 1871), title page.
- 6 "Form and Meaning in Medieval Romance", *The Presidential Address of the Modern Humanities Research Association* (n.p., 1966), p. 2.
- 7 *The Kādambarī of Bāṇa* (London, 1896), pp. xv and xvii.
- 8 Edward C. Dimock, Jr., Edwin Gerow, C.M. Naim, A.K. Ramanujan, Gordon Roadarmal, J.A.B. van Buitenen, *The Literatures of India : An Introduction* (Chicago, 1974), p. 42. The statement is so important to the authors of this book on Indian literature that it appears a second time in nearly identical wording : "Western approaches to literature may not only be passively irrelevant to our appreciation of an exotic tradition, but may actually foster and encourage principles of criticism that make unintelligible the literature we wish to study." (*Ibid*, p. 118.)
- 9 (Louisville, Ky., 1954), p. 242.
- 10 "But by occasion hereof, many other adventures are intermedled, but rather as Accidents, then intendments" personal letter to Sir Walter Raleigh on *The Faerie Queene*, in *Spenser Poetical Works*, eds. J.C. Smith and E. de Selincourt (London, 1912 ; reprint ed., London, 1975), p. 408.
- 11 " 'I wanted to write as dark and as radiant a book as possible. I didn't know that the hero would get out of prison until I was about halfway through. I came running out of the house and shouted, 'Hey ! Hey ! He's going to get out'. ' " (Interview by John Hersey, "John Cheever, Boy and Man", *New York Times Book Review*, 26 March 1978, p. 34.)



- 12 Charles Michener, "Powell : The 'Dance' is Over", *Newsweek*, April 5, 1976, p. 81.
- 13 All quoted material from *Kādambarī* is from my own translation of the narrative, initially done as my Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Chicago, 1979.
- 14 John D. Rosenberg, *The Fall of Camelot : A Study of Tennyson's "Idylls of the King"* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), p. 64.
- 15 *Ibid*, p. 10.
- 16 This 'blueprint' is useful as an argument against the publishing of *Kādambarī* in two parts and the discussing of only Bāṇa's part as the 'real' *Kādambarī* while ignoring Bhūṣaṇabhaṭṭa's work altogether or treating it as a mere curiosity. In fact, a dialogue between those who study oriental literature and those who study Western literature would even more quickly dispose of *Kādambarī*'s dual authorship problem. *The Romance of the Rose* is an excellent example of how a book written in two parts by two authors working independently is treated as a literary unity. Ironically, *Kādambarī*'s two authors acted as one, as far as its arrangement of incidents and essential patternings of description and imagery are concerned, while the *Rose* was composed by men each of whom had entirely different artistic aims.
- 17 Daniell H.H. Ingalls, trans., *An Anthology of Sanskrit Court Poetry : Vidyākara's "Subhūṣitaratnakoṣa"* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), p. 52.
- 18 J.A.B. van Buitenen, trans. and ed., *The Mahābhārata*, vol. 1 (Chicago, 1973), p. 324. All subsequent quotes are from this edition and volume of *The Mahābhārata*.
- 19 Trans. Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington, Ind., 1960), p. 106.
- 20 *Ibid*, p. 290.
- 21 Bhūṣaṇabhaṭṭa's perception of why the story of *Kādambarī* is told is quite different from his father's idea. When Jābālī ends his narration he says : "It is seen by you what power to transport, to carry away the heart, the charm of this story possesses. That which I set out to tell I abandoned and because of the enchantment of the story let the telling get out of hand." The son is saying he is, in fact, enraptured by his father's story. But Bāṇa, the one who set up this complicated and subtle arrangement, tells us the reason for doing so is that combination of pleasure and curiosity which to him was integrally related to the telling of stories.
- 22 A child asking to hear the story of "Cinderella", for instance, would be disappointed, if not downright dismayed, at the exclusion of, say, the three ugly stepsisters. He knows when he asks for the story it will contain certain elements. If, however, he asks for the 'story' of where he comes from, the request is not necessarily made with any stipulations, spoken or unspoken, or expectations. He does not anticipate the details of the 'story' as do the characters in *Kādambarī*, who are, after all, seemingly asking for the same kind of story.

- 23 For example, "Nārada and the 'māyā' of Viṣṇu" (Heinrich Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, ed. Joseph Campbell [New York and Evanston, 1962], pp. 32-33); "King Mu and the Magician" (A.C. Graham, *The Books of Lieh-tzu* [London, 1960], pp. 61-63); and "The Dean of Santiago and the Necromancer" (Don Juan Manuel, *Count Lucanor, or the Fifty Pleasant Stories of Patronio*, trans. James York [London, 1899], pp. 78-84).

**A NOTE ON A NEW PERSIAN TRANSLATION  
FROM TAGORE**

Twenty years ago when Rabindranath Tagore's birthday centennial was celebrated all over the world, I was a student at the University of Tehran and also a member of the Indian Foreign Service. Circumstances and personal impulse resulted in my selection and translation of forty of his poems into Persian. The circumstance was the enthusiasm then in Tehran among the intelligentsia about the Indian national leaders, such as M.K. Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Rabindranath Tagore. The impulse was my passionate belief in the future of Indo-Iranian relations in all spheres. The visit of the late Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji as a guest of Iran added further incentive to my preparing a whole book of translation from Tagore.

Professor Chatterji forthwith accepted my request for reading some of Tagore's poems to me in the original Bengali and giving me their English renderings. Everyday during his one-week stay in Tehran, from around 10 pm till past midnight and whenever he was free in between his formal appointments, we went through this delightful task of reading and interpreting Tagore. Stretched on his bed he excitedly recited the poems he personally liked and remembered by heart. He talked about the days when he had travelled with Tagore in South East Asia for three months in 1927. The atmosphere became charged with music and the joy of the poems lending almost a halo of Tagore around me and my work. Professor Chatterji's contagious joy generated a creative attitude in which we made the final selection of the poems which we were to present to the Iranians. His was the finer part of the contribution which this anthology may have made to the memory of the poet and the Indo-Iranian relations.

The Tagorens were familiar with the centuries-old cultural contacts existing between Iran and India, the inter-relationship of Iranian and

Indian mysticisms, and the influence of Iranian mysticism on the Bhakti movement and literature.<sup>1</sup> Bengali is related to Persian in that both have had their origins in Indo-Aryan. Modern Persian came into contact with Bengali first in the 12th and 13th centuries and then in the 16th under the Mughals. Persian, which was the court language of India till 1835, was widely studied in Bengal for cultural reasons. Legal, religious and administrative registers in Bengali show extensive borrowings from Persian. In other spheres as well many loan-words and phrases from Persian have now become a part of the Bengali language.<sup>2</sup>

Rabindranath was fully conscious of the role of Zoroaster in the history of religions (see his *Religion of Man*) as also of the poetry of Hafiz and other Persian mystics. He personally visited Iran at the invitation of Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1932, stayed a few days in Shiraz which was the home of the great Persian lyricists—Hafiz and Sa'adi—and reflected, we are told by a local tradition, on the message and the poetry of Hafiz in the beautiful Shirazi gardens amidst roses, cypresses and nightingales.

He received deep affection from the Iranians as he mentions in a letter from Iran : “Persians have a passion for poetry, a genuine affection for their poets, and I have obtained a share of this affection without having to show anything for it in return.”<sup>3</sup> His seventy-first birthday which fell on 6th May 1932 was gorgeously celebrated in Iran during this visit. His reply was in the form of a poem, “Victory to Iran” :

Iran, all thy roses in the garden  
and all their lover birds  
have acclaimed the birthday  
of the poet of a faraway shore  
and mingled their voices in a paeon of rejoicing.

Iran, thy brave sons have brought  
their priceless gifts of friendship  
on this birthday of the poet of a faraway shore  
for they have known him in their hearts as their own.

Iran, crowned with a new glory  
by the honour from thy hand  
this birthday of the poet of a faraway shore  
finds its fulfilment.

And in return I bind this wreath of my verse  
 on thy forehead and cry :  
 Victory to Iran !<sup>4</sup>

The history of translations from Sanskrit to the Pahlavi language and from Persian into various Indian languages dates back to the time of the Sasanians (225-651 A.D.). Much later the Upaniṣads were translated from Sanskrit into Persian by the mystic-prince Dara Shikoh (1633/4). He gathered scholars with expertise in Sanskrit, Arabo-Persian, and some having knowledge of both the languages, who together produced a Persian rendering of the Sanskrit Text. This rendering was further subjected to the practitioners of mysticism before arriving at a final version. Fortunately the first translation into Persian of Tagore's poems was not via English. One hundred of his poems were done directly from Bengali into Persian by the late Professor Zia ud-Din of Panjab, who taught at Santiniketan for many years and who was close to Tagore. Professor Chatterji told me that Tagore was aware of this translation which was subsequently discovered by the late Iranian scholar Professor Isma'il Pour Davud during his visit to Santiniketan.

Tagore's sensitive and mystical lyrics shared a lot with the mystical and humanistic *ghazals* of the Iranians. Thematically speaking the Iranian readers do not find his verses exotic. Translations did not therefore pose all those well-known difficulties. The poet himself had set an example in the translation of his own verses into English and thereby granted considerable freedom to his translators, even though his critics consider some of his translations as 'travesties'. "My translations," he himself says, "are frankly prose. My aim is to make them simple, with just a suggestion of rhythm to give them a touch of the lyric."<sup>5</sup>

The procedure for *my* translation was not calculated to be either 'literal' or 'free', but holistic and arbitrary in a sense. My reasoning was that if as a translator I received the poem as one piece, rhythm, music, thought all composing a single complex experience, I would be better equipped to recreate this complex image of sight, feeling and sound into Modern Persian with as much of it intact as possible. The evaluation of the concrete—and not any particular theory of 'phonemic' or 'metrical', 'literal' or 'free' translation etc—determined my exact task of poetic transmutation. In this I followed Burton

Raffel who has said that “the translator is a craftsman ... like an experienced cook he must know when to put just enough of this, just a pinch of that. He must guess, he must experiment—and he must ineluctably make mistakes.”<sup>6</sup>

Under the impact of Western thought during the 19th and 20th centuries, Persian poetry and music had been breaking away from the formalistic restrictions. The modern poet in Iran had been escaping from metre and rhyme first by exploiting the potential available to him in the traditional verse forms like *mustazad* (The Increment Poem), which defies the normal rule of the equalness of two hemistiches, and then by moving to free and blank verse forms, to stanza-poems and other metrical variations.<sup>7</sup> Poetry was given a new dimension by incorporating the spoken (hitherto outcast) language into verse and also by accepting and elevating folk genres like *tasnif* (ballad) to the level of politeness of music and literature.

What Tagore had been doing in Bengali music and poetry had its parallel in what was happening in Iran. When in Tehran, Tagore spent an evening with the Persian musicians, listening to them and discussing with them the ways of innovating, particularly regarding the preservation of the essential indigenous quality, while borrowing from elsewhere. The question was the incorporation of harmony from Western music into the Persian without losing what was essentially Iranian.

The poems that I selected for translation were from *Gitanjali*, *The Gardener*, *The Crescent Moon*, *The Fugitive and Other Poems*, *Fruit Gathering* and *Poems Old and New*. These included “Urvashi”, “Sindhupare”, “Africa”, “You have covered the path of your creation”, “It is time for me to go”, “India” and “Who are you, reader, reading my poems”. The collection was titled *Sarudha-i-Javidani* (Eternal Songs).<sup>8</sup> Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji wrote an introduction, and Professor Reza Zadeh Shaffaq, my teacher at the University of Tehran and an admirer of Tagore, wrote a foreword to it. Professor Shaffaq had met Rabindranath Tagore first in Berlin during his student days, then at Tehran in 1932 and finally at Santiniketan. My friend, Masu’ud Barzin, translator of Gandhi’s *My Experiments with Truth*, kindly read the text before the final version was made.

It is difficult to measure the exact impact of Tagore’s poems and

poems could easily pass as genuine Persian poems. Three of his books have since been translated into Persian : *The Post Office*, *Sacrifice* and *Gitanjali*. A modern painter-poet Sohrab Sepahri (b. 1928), who shows an admiration for Buddhism and whose poems are extremely tender and resemble paintings with fine brush strokes of images held together by delicate threads of feeling, may have had some indirect influence of Tagore. Let me quote a stanza from his poem, "Friend" :

She reflected her own private self  
and interpreted for the mirror  
the most lyrical turns of her time  
and she, like rains, was full of fresh returns  
and she, like trees,  
spread herself amid the blessing of light.  
She always called to the childhood of the wind.  
She always knotted the thread of words  
to the braid of water.<sup>2</sup>

One day in Kashmir I chanced to tune-in the External Service of Radio Iran's "Listeners' Request", which was playing a song of Tagore in Iranian set to popular music. Its English version begins with the line :

It is time for me to go, Mother : I am going.

I was reminded of Hafiz's :

All the parrots of India will become candy-eaters  
in view of the Persian candy that is going to Bengal.

Tradition attributes this *ghazal* to the time when Hafiz was planning to visit India on a royal invitation. Reference certainly is to the popularity of Hafiz's verse in India and particularly Bengal. The debt was being repaid, I thought.

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#### NOTES

- 1 See Turachand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture* (Allahabad, 1946) ; also see the author's "Mysticism in Kashmir : 14th and 15th Centuries", *Muslim World*, LIII (July, 1963), 226-233.

- 2 See S.K. Chatterji, *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* (Calcutta, 1926) ; also see Sukumar Sen, *A History of Bengali Literature* (New Delhi, 1960).
- 3 Amiya Chakravarty, ed., *A Tagore Reader* (New York, 1961), p. 12.
- 4 *Indo-Iranica*, XIV. 2 (June 1961), 1.
- 5 *A Tagore Reader*, p. 391.
- 6 *The Forked Tongue* (The Hague, 1971), pp. 13-14.
- 7 See Munibur Rahman, *Post-Revolution Persian Verse* (Aligarh, 1955), sections on metres and verse forms.
- 8 Free verse was adopted for translation and titles were given to poems or sections of poems which did not have titles in the original.
- 9 Ahmad Karimi, ed., *An Anthology of Modern Persian Poetry* (Colorado, 1978), p. 102.



W.B. YEATS AND JAPAN

(A Select Bibliography)

[ Some Bengali scholars appear to have a notion that the poetry of W.B. Yeats is rarely known outside the English-speaking world. To question this we publish here a very select bibliography on Yeats and Japan. Material has been collected from *Yeats and Japan* (1965) by Shotaro Oshima of Waseda University in Tokyo and from other sources. ]

People who have greatly contributed towards rousing Japan's interest in Yeats include poets, novelists, producers of drama and dancers, in addition to academic scholars like university professors. In a book called *Saikin Kaigai Bungaku* (modern/recent foreign literature, Tokyo, 1901) Yeats was first discussed by Bin Ueda (1874-1916) who in 1904 published Yeats's bibliography from 1885 to 1903. The name of the Irish poet was first mentioned probably in May 1897 in *Taiyo* (the sun) Vol. III, No. 6. The well-known poet Yone Noguchi (1875-1947) who also wrote in English, met Yeats in 1904, published articles on him and in 1920 dedicated to him his book *Japanese Hokkus*. The first Japanese translation from Yeats ("He wishes for the cloths of heaven") was published in the June number of *Myojo* (the morning star), 1904, and the translator was Hakuson Kurjyagawa (1880-1923). In the November number of the same journal was published a translation of *Cathleen ni Hoolihan* by Kaoru Osani (1881-1928). Osani was a leading personality in the Japanese dramatic world and translated in another five years *The Hour Glass*. In 1926 *The Hour Glass* was produced by him at Tsukiji Little Theatre emphasizing the satiric aspect of the dramatist. A professor of English literature at Reitaku University, Mukoto Sungu (b.1890), published many translations from Yeats's poetry and prose. He was personally known to the poet and met

him in Dublin in August 1926. Kazumi Yano (b. 1893) who was President of Tokyo University visited Ireland in 1926, met Yeats, E and Lady Gregory, and translated widely from the Irish writers including Yeats. One of the most interesting intermediaries, however, was a dancer, Michio Ito (1893-1961). The eldest son of a well-to-do family, Ito acquired dancing degrees from Mizuki Dancing School in Japan as also from some major dancing schools in the West. Most probably Ezra Pound discovered him in London and utilised his skill in producing Yeats's plays for the dancers. This talented Japanese dancer acted the Oldman in *At the Hawk's Well* in London. On returning to Japan in 1930, Ito wrote his memoirs *Itsukushiku naru Kyoshitsu* (1956) which can be translated as 'a room for those who wish to become beautiful'. The book is mainly Ito's memories of Yeats and Pound.

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Translation of Yeats into Japanese :

a. *Poetry*

'He wishes for the cloths of heaven', trans. Hakuson Kuriyagawa in *Myojo*, June 1904.

*The Green Helmet*, trans. Teichi Nakagi in *Geki to Shi* (drama and poems), 1912.

Poems from *Wind Among the Reeds*, trans. Yaso Saijo in the William Butler Yeats Special number of *Sei Hai* (the Holy Grail), Vol. II, No. 6, 1913.

Norihiko Yoshikawa, *Jeitsu Shishu* (selected poems from Yeats), 152 pp. Tokyo, 1925.

Tsuneya Kanasugi, *Jeitsu Shisho* (poems from Yeats), trans., 124 pp. Tokyo, 1928.

Makoto Sangu, *Jeitsu Shisho* (poems from Yeats), trans. Tokyo, 1946.

Shotaro Oshima, *Jeitsu Shishu* (poems from Yeats), trans., 342 pp. Tokyo, 1958.

b. *Plays*

*Cathleen ni Houllihan*, trans. Kuoru Osani in *Myojo* (the morning star), Nov 1904.

*The Hour Glass*, trans. Kaoru Osani in *Kabuki*, Jan-May 1909.

*On the Baile's Strand*, trans. Yaso Saijo in *Sei Hai*, Vol. II, No. 6 (1913).

*The Pot of Broth*, trans. Ryoshiro Matsuda in *Sei Hai*, Vol. II, No. 6 (1913).

*The Shadowy Waters*, trans. Kojo Kurihara with a critical biography of Yeats, 52 pp., 1914.

*Calvary*, trans. Mineko Matsumura in *Geki to Hyoron* (drama and criticism), No. 1, 1922.

<i>The Land of Heart's Desire</i>	} trans. Okakura Yoshisaburo and Takei Ryokichi, 98 pp. Tokyo, 1925.
<i>Cathleen ni Hoolihan</i>	
<i>Deirdre</i>	

<i>At the Hawk's Well</i>	} trans. with an essay "Yeats's Plays for Dancers: A Study" by Jiro Nan, 150 pp. Tokyo, 1928. (In <i>Two Plays for Dancers</i> ).
<i>The Only Jealousy of Emer</i>	

*At the Hawk's Well*, trans. Tokuboku Hirata in *Airurando geki shu* (collected plays of the world), Vol. IX. 1928.

*Deidre*, trans. Sofu Taketomo in the above collection of plays of the world.

*At the Hawk's Well*, trans. Saisuke Nagasawa in *Nihon no no-gaku* (Noh Plays), Tokyo, 1932.

*At the Hawk's Well* (*Taka no Izumi*), trans. and adaptation Mario Yokomichi in *No-gakuno yube* (the eve of Noh plays). Tokyo, 1949. (A new version of the play adapted for the Noh stage with elaborate craftsmanship and Japanese classical rhetoric. The play was staged in December 1940 and October 1949. The publication was for the inauguration of "The Society for Noh Revival".)

<i>Cathleen ni Hoolihan</i>	} trans. Mineko Matsumura in
<i>The Land of Heart's Desire</i>	
<i>At the Hawk's Well</i>	

*Taka no Ido/Hoka Nihen/Ieltsu*. Tokyo, 1953.

1. *Prose*

*Ideas of Good and Evil*, trans. Makoto Sangu. Tokyo, 1915.

*The Celtic Twilight* (three pieces : "The Eaters of Precious Stones", "The Three O'Byrnes and the Evil Faeries", and "Regina, Regina Pigmeorum Veni"), trans. Ryunosuke Akutagawa in *the Shin-Shicho* (new trend of thought), 1914. (Akutagawa was a famous novelist.)

"The Symbolism of Poetry" and "William Blake and the Imagination", trans. Makoto Sangu in *Mirai* (the future), Vol. I, 1914.

*Irish Tales and Folk Tales (Ieitsu Dowashu)*, trans. Makoto 346 pp. Tokyo, 1925.

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A selected list of books and articles on Yeats in Japanese :

"Yeats's Symbolism", Kojo Kurihara in *Teikoku Bungaku* (imperial literature), Vol. XIV, No. 11 (1908).

"Yeats' Symbolic Dramas Based on Legends" and

"A Biographical Sketch of Yeats", Konosuke Hinatsu in the Yeats number of *Sei Hai* (the Holy Grail), July 1913.

"W.B. Yeats : His Life", Rintaro Fukuhara in *Eigo Seinen* (the rising generation), No. 9, 1924.

"A Japanese Note on Yeats", Yonejiro Noguchi in *Eigo Seinen*, No. 10, 1924. (Nos. 9, 10 and 11 of this journal were devoted to W.B. Yeats.)

*Uiriamu Batora Ieitsu* (W.B. Yeats : A Study), Shotaro Oshima. 402 pp. Tokyo, 1927.

"Yeats's Plays for Dancers : A Study", Jiro Nan in *Two Plays for Dancers*. Tokyo, 1928.

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*Ieitsu* (Yeats), Shotaro Oshima. 154 pp. 1934.

"On Hearing Yeats's Death", Tokuboku Hirata in *Eigo Seinen*, Vol. LXXX, No. 12 (1939).

"Yeats and Japan", Hojin Yano in *Sekaijin* (the cosmopolitan), Vol. I, No. 1 (1948).

"On the News of Yeats's Death" and

- "Yeats and Japan", Makoto Sangu in *Shomotsu to Chosa* (books and authors). Tokyo, 1949.
- "A Note on *A Vision* of W.B. Yeats", Iwao Mizuta in *Yamaguchi Daigaku Kyoikugakubu Kenkyu Ronso* (Bulletin of the Faculty of Education, Yamaguchi University), Vol. I, No. 1 (1951).
- "Some Aspects of the Later Yeats—Tragedy of a 'Whole Man' ", Iwao Mizuta, in the Bulletin of the Faculty of Education, Yamaguchi University, 1952.
- "Yeats and Symbolism", Kazumi Yano in *Eigo Seinan*, special issue, 1954.
- Utsukushiku naru Kyoshitsu* (a room for those who wish to become beautiful), Michio Ito (Memories of Yeats and Pound). Tokyo, 1956.
- "My Reminiscences : A Talk", Michio Ito in *Hikaku-bunka, Dai-ni-shu* (comparative studies of culture), No. 2, 1956. (On how Yeats listened to an utai or chanting of a Noh text done by two Japanese non-professional reciters.)
- "Yeats and Masks", Shoichiro Yasuda in *Kenkyu Nempo* (annual studies), No. 1. Nara, 1958.
- "An Introduction to the *Last Poems* of W.B. Yeats", Akira Shimazu in *Jimbun Kenkyu* (human studies), No. 14. 1958.

## BOOK REVIEW

*Primico*, de Robindronath Tagor. El la bengala : Probal Daśgupto. Stafeto, Copenhagen, 1977. 114 pages.

Opinions vary on Tagore's importance as an imaginative writer ; his reputation in the West as a poet mostly rests upon the evidence of his own translations into English of his lyrical poetry which many find, although competent, banal. Possibly this is the main reason for the general feeling that his work has dated badly, together with the failure of his main project—that of synthesizing Eastern and Western cultures on the basis of idealization.

All the same it is well known that Tagore innovated in much of his work, bringing the traditional literary Bengali closer to the spoken language, and thus played a very important social role in his country. His struggle against the stultifying influences of tradition has a general common value that has the potentiality, always, of being appreciated in a new context, besides its enduring value in his homeland. But evidently much depends on how successfully his work is rendered into other languages.

Mr Daśgupto's translations into Esperanto of this fair selection of Tagore's poetry are characterized by unusual sensitivity and scrupulousness. His preface attests his scholarly dedication to the author and his work ; the translations themselves testify to his profound study and understanding of the originals and his masterly exploitation of the potentialities of the international language. Having no working knowledge of Bengali, I can all the same feel its authentic background through the Esperanto foregrounding of Daśgupto's literary achievement. His versions read as true poetic expression on many levels at the same time, as all good poetry should.

His mastery of phonological schemes is evident in the prose poems as well as in the verse patterns :

Mi plukis vian floron, ho mondo. Mi premis ĝin al la  
koro, kaj mian bruston dorno pikis. (18, the beginning)

Here the echoic effects of the plosives “plukis, premis, bruston, pikis” contribute to creation of art on the phonological level (all appearing at the front of important words, the repetition of the p-sound agreeably modified by the softer b-sound in “bruston”, thus creating a sort of parallelism); the skillful variation of accented vowels contributes at the same time to the phonetic make-up of the whole. On the level of rhythm there are agreeable deviations from two possible norms : that of metrical regularity and that of spoken discourse. The inverted word order in the last phrase adds to the syntactical effectiveness :

Kiam la nokto finĝis, forironte sole,  
vi staris sojle.  
Kiom da kantoj el ĉi voĉ’ burgonis,  
mi donis.  
Vi ridetis,  
vian amvean fluton en miajn manojn metis.  
De l’morgaŭo ĝis nun,  
en printempo, aŭtun’,  
ĉas vejo en ĉiel’ kaj vento :  
plore, ploure, ire, vene, de fluto kaj kanto disĝa lamento. (8)

This example of metrical rhymed verse is throughout raised above rule-governed banality by a whole host of artistic devices. Changes of rhythm, unequal length of lines, varying sorts of rhymes, are only some of the poetic disturbances of the patterns or formality that otherwise would have made the poem ineffective on the phonological level.

Dāsgupto’s mastery of form is well matched by his skill and sensitivity on the levels of lexicon and semantics. Judging from the translations alone, without access to the originals, hollow or empty expressions can hardly be found, fullness of meaning is ubiquitous

and actively alive. Careful use of the almost free possibilities of Esperanto word-building and its 'concept-making' power of neologism, gives the translator ample opportunities for artistic lexical deviation from the norms of ordinary discourse : *trastolera*, *larm-girlande*, *forirontas*, *iomoj*, *brustoeno*, *neniomkavo*, *aceraro*, etc are only a few examples of such foregrounded words that perhaps more than anything else give the translations their particular linguistic embedment : this is Esperanto, livingly and artistically used, no doubt about it. But there are other aspects, equally laudable, on these levels : semantic clarity, skillful solutions of compressed syntactical problems affecting the meaning, etc. On the whole the translations read as very good and often great poetry, without any traces of artificiality or excessive inventedness, which is, in my opinion, the clearest proof of translational success.

Readers of Esperanto must be thankful to Mr Daśgupto for his careful translations of such a fine selection from the poetry of his famous countryman ; they will serve as a valuable introduction to his poetical and personally social thinking.

*Baldur Ragnarsson*



*Robert Antoine, S.J. (1914-81)*

A senior teacher of the Jadavpur department and a major contributor to this journal, an eminent classical scholar and an extraordinary man, Father Robert Antoine passed away on 19 October 1981.

Born on 11 August 1914 at Limbourg, Belgium of a working class family, he joined the Society of Jesus after finishing school in 1932. He did his baccalauréat in Greek and Latin and his licencié in Philosophy, and then in 1939 came to India. Here he began Sanskrit and after a few years of rigour attained a master's in Sanskrit from Calcutta University. He also did Bengali and English as well as his theology master's and was ordained priest in 1946. While teaching Sanskrit in Calcutta's St Xavier's Collegiate School he wrote a two-volume *Sanskrit Manual* (1953), a fresh and scientific approach to this classical language. In the meantime he had taken Indian citizenship and had started with a fellow Jesuit, Father Pierre Fallon, a students' home, Santi Bhavan, in a predominantly Bengali neighbourhood. Here he lived the rest of his life coming into an increasingly closer contact with the Bengali community, understanding its culture ever more deeply and serving it ever more sincerely.

In 1956 when the first and till now the only full-fledged Comparative Literature department of India was founded by the late Buddhadeva Bose at the newly founded Jadavpur University, Father Antoine joined its faculty as a classical and medieval specialist. It was while teaching Homer that he made his first comparative literary study, "Indian and Greek Epics" which was later included in Columbia's *Approaches to the Oriental Classics* (1959). He was away from Jadavpur for four years, but when he came back in 1963 he was all resolved for sustained classical and comparative studies. He began a series of articles which came out in the Jadavpur journal : **first preparatory**, "The Vision of Dante" (1966), "Greek Tragedy and **Shakespearean Drama**" (1968) and "Classical Forms of the Simile" (1969) ;

then two mythic readings of the *Vālmiki-Rāmāyaṇa*, “Calliope and the Epic of Rāvaṇa” (1973) and “Calliope and Rāma’s Initiation” (1974), which were later developed into a book, *Rāma and the Bards* (1975); further, two considerations of Structuralism, “From Aristotle to Roland Barthes” (1975) and “The Structural Analysis in Action” (1976-77), and one related, “Bharata and Aristotle” (1978-79); and finally the present one, posthumously, “The Curse in *Oedipus Rex* and *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*”. Myth and structure were complimentary interests and it should be clear from this list, as also from the articles he published elsewhere and lectures he gave at various places, that he was in search of the central mystery of ancient literature, whether Greek or Indian, whether epic or drama. And perhaps it was partly this that inspired him to translate Kālidāsa’s *Raghuvamśa* into English (1972) and Virgil’s *Aeneid* (1972) and *Seven Theban Tragedies* (1974) into Bengali in collaboration with Hrishikesh Bose, a colleague at Jadavpur.

The last work of Father Antoine is a nearly finished full-length study of *The Technique of Oral Composition in the Rāmāyaṇa*, designed on the Parry-Lord line but with a lot of insight added, to be a complement as it were to his *Rāma and the Bards*. Its last pages he had begun to write on deathbed braced against the galloping cancer in the liver, but the end came too quickly. However, what he has left is immensely valuable including the *kūṇḍa* by *kāṇḍa*, *sarga* by *sarga*, analysis of the whole *Vālmiki*.

A scholar of such eminence, and an eminent teacher—whether at Jadavpur or elsewhere, whether of literature or languages—Father Antoine was also an eminent priest who helped Indianize the Christian services in West Bengal by introducing Bengali in every possible way. Besides, the musical talent he had developed in schooldays made him master the Indian system, and with that grounding he became an exponent particularly of Tagore songs. Not only did he sing Bengali or sometimes Sanskrit with understanding and emotion, but also taught or occasionally wrote music. And by no means was he confined to urban audiences or urban students or urban congregations, the enormity of the mourning at his death proved the extent of love he bore and responsibilities he fulfilled. One of these many was saying mass every week at Mother Teresa’s home for the destitute.

We dedicate this number of the journal to Father Antoine’s

### *Comparative Literature in China*

Dipankar Basu, a graduate student at Jadavpur, has drawn our attention to an extremely interesting item published in the Culture & Science section of *Beijing Review* of March 22, 1982. This article by Guan Jian informs the readers that Comparative Literature is "a flourishing discipline" in China, particularly in Beijing University. Here are some generous excerpts from this article.

In recent years, Chinese scholars have stepped up their studies of comparative literature. Many articles have been published, such as *A Brief Outline of Comparative Literature* by Zhou Weimin, *European and American Literature in China* by Yuan Kejia, the *History of Comparative Literature* by Ji Xianlin, *Lu Xun's Works and their Relations with Foreign Literature* by Wang Yao as well as many special works such as Qian Zhongshu's *Four Old Essays* and *Studies in Letters and Ideas*.

Two major areas of study can be roughly delineated—the study of influences and the study of parallels. The former examines causal relations between writings, the source and direction of particular literary elements. For instance, in his article *Foreign Dramas in China* written in 1980, Mao Dun systematically described how Japanese plays of the new school influenced the emergence of China's modern drama in 1907 and its development. By studying common trends, scholars of this discipline search for evidence of influences among different literature. For instance, the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) masterpiece of poetic drama *Orphan of the House of Zhao* aroused great interests among European scholars in the 18th century after it had been translated by the Jesuit missionary father Prémaire, and adapted by Voltaire (1694-1778) into *L'Orphelin de la Chine* and by Metastasio (1698-1782) into *L'Eroe Cinese*. The 18th-century critic Richard Hurd and the Chinese scholar Wang Guowei (1877-1927) considered the poetic drama of the piece comparable to the great Greek tragedies.

Qian Zhongshu makes remarkably thorough efforts in the study of parallels. Basing himself on different cultural genealogies, he tries to seek the common laws of literary creations, i.e., "a common literary mind". His *Studies in Letters and Ideas* represents his contributions in this field.... Qian believes that the study of anthropology has suggested that the similarity of life patterns in early human society inevitably left similar imprints on the spirit of every nationality.

Chinese scholars also conduct their studies from the angle of psychological characteristics common to all nationalities.

In 1930, the Chinese translator Fu Donghua rendered the French scholar Frédéric Lolicé's book *Histoire des Origines au XXe Siecle* into Chinese.... Ruling his views on the rise and fall of some other countries, in 1907 Lu Xun wrote *On the Demoniac Poets*, one of the greatest works of

early comparative literature, in which he expounded the common laws governing literary development and urged China "to seek new voices from other countries".

During the May 4th Movement in 1919, China absorbed a great deal of the West's advanced scholarship, and thus pushing its study of comparative literature to a new height. For instance, Guo Moruo published *On Chinese and German Literature* in 1923 and Xu Dishan *Sanskrit Plays in China* in 1925, which were followed by the publication of a series of valuable articles and works dealing with the influences of Chinese literature on that of Europe, such as *Chinese Dramas in Britain in the 17th and 18th Centuries* by Fan Cunzhong and *Study on Chinese and German Literature* by Chen Quan, both in the 30s.

In the 40s, Zhu Guangqian published *On Poetry*, in which he applied Western aesthetics and literary psychology to the study of Chinese poetry. Yang Xianyi published *Miscellaneous Jottings on Literature*, in which he made a comparative study on East-West literature and arts and other areas of the humanities. The study in this field continued till early 50s. After that, however, differences appeared in the academic circles. Some continued their studies while others considered the study bourgeois.

Today, the study of comparative literature in China is being conducted in an organized way rather than by individual working alone as in the past. In February last year, a comparative literature research society was set up in Beijing University which publishes two magazines, the *Bulletin of the Society* and *Series of the Society*. One of its series, *Translation of Works of Comparative Literature* has just come off the press.

This is certainly a very welcome development. Comparative Literature is not then just a decadent fad as many of our brown sahibs suspected. The number of comparatists are happily increasing in our Eastern hemisphere. Our greetings to the Chinese followers of this discipline.